

# THE NORTHEASTERN ANARCHIST

Magazine of the Northeastern Federation of Anarcho-Communists

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**Despite the  
Tragedy of  
September 11th,  
We Still Remain  
Un governable!**



## Anarchists Against the War



# The Northeastern Anarchist

The Northeastern Anarchist is the English-language magazine of the Northeastern Federation of Anarcho-Communists (NEFAC), covering news of revolutionary resistance from the region, and publishing class struggle anarchist theory, history and analysis in an effort to further develop anarchist communist ideas and practice.

The Northeastern Federation of Anarcho-Communists (NEFAC) is a bi-lingual (French and English) organization of revolutionaries from the northeastern region of North America who identify with the communist tradition within anarchism. The federation is organized around the principles of theoretical coherence, tactical unity, collective responsibility and federalism. Our activities include study and theoretical development, anarchist agitation and propaganda, and intervention within the class struggle.

As anarcho-communists, we struggle for a classless, stateless and non-hierarchical society. We envision an international confederation of directly democratic, self-managed communities and workplaces; a society where all markets, exchange value, systems of wages and divisions of labor have been abolished and the means production and distribution are socialized in order to allow for the satisfaction of human needs, adhering to the communist principle: "From each according to ability, to each according to need."

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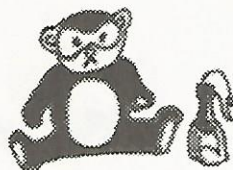
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# This is NEFAC!

## An Introduction to the Northeastern Federation of Anarcho-Communists

The Northeastern Federation of Anarcho-Communists (NEFAC) is a bi-lingual (French and English) organization of revolutionaries from the northeastern region of North America who identify as anarcho-communists. We oppose all forms of oppression and exploitation. We struggle for a classless, stateless, non-hierarchical society.

To achieve such a society, we must bring an end to patriarchy, white supremacy and class domination; smash state power; abolish the wage system and market economy; expropriate the wealth of the rich; and socialize the means of production for the benefit of society as a whole. This means nothing short of social revolution, which can only emerge from autonomous social movements and the revolutionary self-activity of the working class.

### REVOLUTION REQUIRES ORGANIZATION

We believe that, if only to wage the 'battle of ideas', anarchist organizations are necessary. We reject the vision which reduces the idea of revolution to the authoritarian seizure of power by a centralized party which is believed to be acting in the name of the masses. We know that this vision has led to bloody dictatorships and has nothing to do with socialism.

NEFAC is not a party, or a self-proclaimed vanguard, and we do not see ourselves as an organization that will "lead" the anarchist movement, nevermind "lead" the entire working class to social emancipation. We recognize that a successful revolution can only be carried out directly by the working class. However, we believe this must be preceded by organizations able to radicalize mass movements and popular struggles, combat authoritarian and reformist tendencies, act as a forum where ideas and experiences between militants can be debated and synthesized, and provide a vehicle for the maximum political impact of anarchist ideas within the general working class.

In NEFAC, we think that this activity can be roughly divided into three different areas: study and theoretical development, anarchist agitation and propaganda, and intervention in the class struggle.

### WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE DO

NEFAC unofficially began in 1999 as a loose network between English-speaking anarchist-communists from northeastern U.S. and French-speaking Quebecois anarchist-communists who shared a mutual dissatisfaction with the state of the anarchist movement on both sides of the border. In April 2000, NEFAC was officially launched at a conference in Boston, MA.

The federation is organized around the principles of theoretical coherence, tactical unity, collective responsibility and federalism. Our membership is composed of collectives, affinity groups, and individuals throughout the region. Our activity (either directly through the federation, or autonomously through our participation within larger grassroots coalitions) has included work in the anti-globalization movement, anti-war activism, international solidarity and prisoner support, workplace and community organizing, anti-racist struggles, and anti-poverty work. The purpose of the federation is to connect this local and regional activity to a larger strategy of social revolution, and, ultimately, a vision of a libertarian communist future.

NEFAC is a directly democratic and federalist organization. We are also a membership organization, with membership dues and certain obligations to one and other. We have a straightforward constitution and members are expected to abide by it. Major decisions are made at bi-annual conferences where every member has one vote and no one has any more say than anyone else. Smaller decisions (like whether or not to endorse a statement, etc.) in between conferences are made by a Federal Council, a delegate council composed of representatives from each NEFAC member collective. All delegates are instantly recallable by the groups that they represent, and are directly accountable to them. Open debate is encouraged; we have no party line or party bosses. We are organized in this way because we believe that the structure of our federation should reflect the kind of society we want to live in: democratic, participatory, accountable, and anti-authoritarian.

### HOW TO GET INVOLVED

NEFAC has two types of involvement: members and supporters.

A member is any group or individual that agrees with the politics of the federation, fulfills the expectations of membership, and has had their candidature accepted by a bi-annual conference. The federation recognizes two types of membership - collective and individual. Because the anarcho-communist vision of society and revolutionary activity are in essence fundamentally collective, individual membership can only be seen as a temporary measure.

A supporter is any group or individual who agrees with the positions and orientations of the federation, but cannot or does not want to fulfill the membership expectations (supporter status is also a preliminary stage for collectives and individuals who expect to apply for full membership).

Whether applying for individual or collective membership, the process is essentially the same. First, the interested group or individual needs to contact either the member collective which is closest to them (geographically) or the General Secretariat, informing the Federation of their interest in joining. Either the closest member collective or the General Secretariat can then immediately approve them for supporter status. If supporter status is approved, the group will then be expected to engage in a working relationship with the rest of the Federation. If the group so desires, they can then apply for full membership at any subsequent conference. The purpose of the supporter status and the requirement that a supporter collective wait until the following conference to apply for membership is to ensure that the collectives who join the federation are stable, since we all know how quickly anarchist collectives can come and go.

NEFAC is not a large organization, and we have no pretensions about our importance. However, we are convinced enough of our ideas to want to spread them as widely as possible, both by propaganda and involvement in social movements and popular struggles. If you agree with our politics and support our activity, please get in touch!



# The Growing Wave of Anti-War Protest in the Region

## HARTFORD

On Thursday, October 25, eighteen people were arrested and one person had their ribs broken during a demonstration against the bombing of Afghanistan in Hartford, Connecticut. Over 200 people gathered in Bushnell Park, and then marched towards the Senator's office. During the march, police used cruisers, billy clubs and bullhorns to try to scare demonstrators onto the sidewalk, eventually resulting in numerous scuffles, the use of pepper spray and arbitrary arrests. Charges ranged from "disorderly conduct" and "breach of peace" to "inciting riot". Most of the arrestees were given bail from \$10,000 to \$50,000.

## BOSTON

There are currently three different city-wide anti-war coalitions working in Boston. The first is the Boston Campus Anti-War Coalition, a coalition of progressive stu-

dents opposed to war; the second is Justice With Peace, led to a large extent by pacifists and Quakers; and the third is the Boston Anarchists Against Militarism (BAAM), a coalition formed in order to provide an explicitly anarchist pole for local anti-war activity.

As a first action, on September 20, BAAM organized an unpermitted night march against war, nationalism and racism, which attracted the participation of over 1,000 people. Despite attempts by the International Action Center to try and hijack the march, and an unsuccessful blockade set-up by police, the march was a great success. Following this demonstration, nearly two thousand people gathered for a rally and march called for by the Justice With Peace coalition on October 14 to express their opposition to the war. An



Crushing dissent in Connecticut

anarchist contingent of about 80 people, which included dozens of black flags and banners which read "Solidarity With The Revolutionary Women of Afghanistan: Fuck The Taliban!" and "Fight The State, Not Its Wars," was organized by BAAM, and was followed closely throughout the march by about a dozen cops.

On November 10, BAAM organized an anarchist anti-war teach-in, which attracted over a hundred people throughout the day. Topics included anarchist positions on war, radical labor's response, diversity of tactics in anti-war activism, women and war, and the necessity of revolution to end all wars. There was also a radical art workshop, as well as presentations on the implications of the current war for immigrants, and life and resistance in Afghanistan.

## AMHERST

On October 19th, at Amherst College, in Amherst, Massachusetts, a group of anarchists disrupted an "Assembly for Patriotism" by burning two American flags immediately after a crowd of about a hundred people finished reciting the Pledge of Allegiance. While standing on a flag that had been spread out on the ground, protesters chanted: "This flag doesn't represent me; this flag doesn't represent us." The patriotic crowd stared in bewildered silence as the flag burned.

## WASHINGTON, DC

Despite the cancellation of the World Bank and IMF meetings scheduled for the

## Boston Anarchists Against Militarism

### Basis of Unity

*In all wars the object is to protect or to seize money, property and power, and there will always be wars so long as Capital rules and oppresses people. - Ernst Friedrich, War Against War (1924)*

1. The Boston Anarchists Against Militarism (BAAM) is a coalition of social anarchists committed to building an anti-war resistance movement in the greater Boston area.

2. We believe that it is not enough to act as a defensive response to military conflict. To bring an end to the global cycle of militaristic violence we must develop a resistance movement that attacks the root causes of war: capitalism, the State, and all forms of exploitation and oppression.

3. We reject nationalism, patriotism, racism, and all forms of chauvinism and bigotry used to mislead the working class into indentifying with, and reinforcing, the interests of the ruling class. We promote anti-racism and internationalist working class solidarity as our

strongest weapon against the global ruling classes and their wars.

4. We are not interested in a "peace" that is a return to a pre-war status quo. We believe that there can be no peace without justice, and actively struggle for a world in which not only war but also social, political and economic inequality are abolished.

5. We respect a diversity of tactics. We encourage the development of autonomous and creative forms of struggle in the growing anti-war movement, ranging from public education campaigns to direct action.

6. BAAM is autonomous, decentralized and non-hierarchical. We encourage the involvement of anyone who accepts these points of unity.

**No War Against Nations, No Peace Between Classes!**

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weekend of September 29-30, in Washington DC, thousands of people converged on the city, shifting the focus of the demonstration towards the new 'war on terrorism'. The demonstrations were much smaller than originally expected as many groups decided to pull out in the wake of the events of September 11, citing a plethora of excuses. Two groups that decided to carry on with their organizing were the Anti-Capitalist Convergence and International ANSWER (Workers World Party; International Action Center). The ACC march, which began at 9am, was attended by approximately one thousand people, about one hundred black bloc, and, unsurprisingly, also attended by several hundred police officers in riot gear.

The police repeatedly prevented the march from heading down its intended route, leading to several scuffles. Numerous people were pepper-sprayed and arrested, and the assistant chief of police was smashed in the head with a flagpole, sending him reeling onto the hood of a police car. The march finally ended in front of the World Bank headquarters, where participants found themselves unable to leave as hundreds of riot police blocked all streets. It later was revealed that keeping one thousand people penned in a park was a "tactical move aimed at calming an often hostile crowd." Following this the march was forcibly steered to the

coalition aimed directly at spreading accurate information and alternative perspectives on the current crisis, and to promote international solidarity between peoples on both sides of the conflict.

The group will focus on education, discussion and getting out the true perspective on recent events. Consideration has been given to such projects as a website, publications, direct contacts with opposition groups in the frontline countries, travelling troupe of speakers and performers, a public access television program, and a group to make presentations to schools and social groups.

If you are interested in the project, please e-mail: [wsany@hotmail.com](mailto:wsany@hotmail.com).

## BALTIMORE

The Roundhouse Collective has been active in anti-war actions, mostly through participation with the Baltimore Anti-War Coalition. The coalition is a consensus assembly with a

variety of leftist groups and individual members.

Roundhouse attended a rally hosted by the All People's Congress. Roundhouse and the Anti-Capitalist Convergence on September 29th in DC, where one of the members was arrested at an action related to the DC General Hospital with several other friends on charges of "attempted pos-

session of implements of crime"; everyone was eventually released when the State declined to prosecute.

The Anti-War Coalition has functioned as a coalition. The coalition has had numerous rallies and protests, on October 7th we voiced our opposition. There was also a vigil outside the federal courthouse in downtown

Baltimore as a reaction to the loss of our civil liberties. Coming up we are planning a teach in and a rally focusing on the need for humanitarian aid for the people in Afghanistan and the surrounding refugee camps. Roundhouse's primary activity in opposition to the war is publicizing and fundraising for the Revolutionary Association of Women of Afghanistan.

## QUEBEC CITY

On September 29, nearly 500 people demonstrated against war and racism in Quebec City. The call

was made by an ad-hoc coalition of student unions, international solidarity groups, as well as local anarchists and socialists. After marching through the city for awhile, a strong anti-capitalist bloc decided to take the front of the march and headed toward the the affluent neighborhood of Moncalm. Unfortunately, many people decided to head back to a rally where they listened to numerous speeches and then went home.

## MONTREAL

Over one thousand people demonstrated against war and racism in downtown Montreal on September 23. The protest was called by the Emergency Coalition Against War Hysteria and Racism, and began with a gathering at the Norman Bethune statue at Concordia University. Speakers on the outdoor sound system included a member of the local Afghan community, a member of a group organizing against the sanctions policy in Iraq (Voices of Conscience), and a representative of the South Asian Women's Community Center. The speakers voiced clear opposition to war, racism and some spoke of the context of US imperialism in the world.

## HALIFAX

On October 13, a group of activists locked down at one entrance to the Department of National Defense military base in Halifax, Nova Scotia. The group set up a 'peace camp' and demanded an immediate end to Canada's military involvement in the U.S.-led war against Afghanistan.

## NEW YORK CITY

Members of several non-authoritarian groups have been meeting to form a new



*Anti-Capitalist Convergence takes to the streets of Washington, DC*

site of the International ANSWER rally. On the way there were several more scuffles with police, resulting in a few more arrests.



# Protests Shadow Annual Meetings of the G20, IMF, and World Bank

**OTTAWA** - From November 16-18, the Finance Ministers and central bank governors of the Group of 20 (G20) nations, as well as key segments of the World Bank and IMF, met, once again, amidst teargas and confrontational protests in the Canadian capital of Ottawa.

On Friday, although crowds were much smaller than expected, a spirited demonstration of about 350 people roamed the downtown area chanting, banging drums, and taunting police. Before they set off, protesters held a brief

rally. One of the speakers, Jaggi Singh, of the Anti-Capitalist Convergence (CLAC), said that in the wake of the Sept. 11 suicide attacks, it was more important than ever to speak out against the terrorism of the World

Bank and IMF. He finished by stating: "We oppose a view of the world that looks like Disney, tastes like Coke and smells like shit".



*Bringing down the barricades*

Early in the demonstration, groups of anarchists managed to dismantle sections of the police barricades and briefly enter the security perimeter. From here protesters continued on, with small groups of people dragging newspaper boxes into the streets, spray painting graffiti on a number of banks, and smashing in the windows of a McDonalds restaurant with rocks and metal poles. By early evening the demonstration thinned out, and special police squads used tear gas and concussion grenades to dis-

perse the remaining participants, arresting a number of individuals for alleged vandalism.

On Saturday, thousands of protesters converged on the Supreme Court building to oppose the anti-terrorism legislation, Bill C-36, and were met by a group of 50 riot cops. After removing a set of police barricades, a number of people were able to march towards the Conference Center where the G20 meetings were taking place. However, before they could reach the center itself, they were repelled by police who used fire hoses, bean bag rounds and tear gas against the crowds. During the melee, armed officers pushed their way into the crowd and pulled out several black bloc anarchists for arrest. Injuries included a number of people bitten by police dogs, one person who had their leg broken by a plastic bullet, and another who had their head smashed by a police truncheon.

By mid-afternoon, after two separate confrontations with the police, protesters had retreated from the security perimeter. Later, nearly 800 protesters confronted 300 riot police on Rideau St. A number of rocks and bottles were thrown at the lines on police, and some plywood was appropriated from the boarded up windows of a CIBC bank and used as a shield. More tear gas was used, and eventually demonstrators dispersed.

## anti-Patriarcat!

**MONTREAL** - Under a huge banner which read "Fuck Patriarchy Before it Fucks You" the first NEFAC anti-Patriarchy conference began at Concordia University on December 1st with about 75 people attending.

Presentations began on the historical roots of patriarchy and the competing theories surrounding this most enigmatic of oppressions. Three women from the Montreal local union of NEFAC outlined why we must fight against the theory that women's oppression is somehow "natural." Women's work, both paid and unpaid, and women's bodies as commodities was examined. The institutions that prop up patriarchy such as the Church were tied into a historic outline tracing it as the oldest system of oppression. Regarding hunter & gatherer societies, although often presented by anthropologists (and primitivists) as edenic, women's position in that division of labor was more akin to slavery. Through the Middle Ages to modern Capitalist societies, women's "tools" have been appropriated or marginalized, while traditional roles have expanded to fit changing societies in both the East and West.

A raucous skit on machismo in the anarchist movement by local theatre activist Norman Nawrocki introduced a workshop on "Patriarchy, Sexism and Heterosexism," in which the subtleties of the politics of "free love," non-monogamy, and "sexuality as the glue which holds patriarchy together" were debated. A crowd returned the next day to discuss "Family Relationships and Gender Socialization" and finally, "Patriarchy, Capitalism and Social Struggles."

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## THE THIRD ANNUAL NEW ENGLAND ANARCHIST BOOKFAIR

**AMHERST** - The most successful New England Anarchist Bookfair to date was held in Amherst, Massachusetts, on November 3rd. Between 800-1,000 people, from Montreal to Philadelphia and everywhere in between, came to the campus of rural Hampshire College to peruse literature tables, listen to speakers, mingle, and network. Hampshire College was well suited to host the event with ample lecture room space and an outdoor courtyard for attendees to play, chat, and plot revolution on a beautiful New England fall day.

Over a dozen talks and performances were held to enlighten and entertain the anarchist mind. In one humorous skit, Bush and Bin Laden pro-wrestled while the referee stated their crimes. Following this was a panel discussion titled *Current Crises on the Left: What the Fuck Do We Do Now?*

Hundreds of anarchists and allies packed the lecture hall to hear Cindy Milstein, Michael Albert, Noel Ignatiev and Pari who delivered a speech by Jaggi Singh (prevented from attending by U.S. border pigs). After several good speeches talking about how to reach out better to non-activists, Noel Ignatiev responded that the task at hand is not talking to those we disagree with, but getting together with those we do agree with and resisting collectively. Other interesting workshops included Darini Nicholas' *Anarchism, Race and Nationalism*, Michael Albert's *Anarchist Economics* and *Anarchist Federation: Lessons of the Love and Rage Revolutionary Anarchist Federation for Today* by Wayne Price.

The continued success of the annual bookfairs is a positive reflection of the growth and development of anarchist movement here in the New England region.



# O16: Economic Disruption Hits Canada's Financial Center

**TORONTO** - On October 16, under the slogan "Fight To Win," the Ontario Common Front launched its campaign of economic disruption and direct action aimed at unseating the province's rightwing Conservative government. With the announced resignation of the much-despised Premier Mike Harris (for "personal reasons") the night before, a small victory was celebrated even before the demonstration got underway.

At 5am thousands of demonstrators met at Nathan Phillips Square (City Hall) for breakfast, music, speeches and preparation. Despite a number of pre-emptive arrests, the massive police presence failed to deter activists from assembling. By 6am riot police had surrounded the square and attempted to block the march from leaving the area. Those attempt to head towards the financial district were met by a huge wall of riot cops armed with rubber bullet guns, shields, batons, and riot gear. After a brief standoff, the march circled around the park and effectively by-passed the police blockade and headed towards the financial district.

People split into various "snake-marches" and made their way through the heart of Toronto's financial district, maneuvering

around flanks of riot police and bringing vehicular and pedestrian traffic to a standstill. Major intersections were systematically barricaded with overturned newspaper boxes, while subway station entrances were temporarily closed. According to several reports, many companies and firms simply told their employees to stay at home for the day.

At the peak of the march a protestor had climbed onto the large overhang covering the front doors to one of Toronto's most affluent hotels, grabbed the American flag hanging above, spray-painted "murder" across it and set it on fire. Following this incident, protesters headed over to the American consulate, where a few anti-war speeches were made and paint bombs were thrown at the front door. At this point, the black bloc started tip-

ping over police barricades and vehicles.

Throughout the demonstration there were several scuffles between protesters and police, and some instances of property destruction: a few bank windows were broken, investment firms had paint bombs thrown at them, police cars had their tires slashed, newspaper boxes were burned, and graffiti was painted throughout the area. By the end of the day there were 40 arrests, ranging from relatively minor charges of "breach of peace" to the more serious "manufacture of explosives".

Meanwhile, Toronto's rightwing mayor, Mel Lastman, was quoted in mainstream reports describing protesters as "absolutely disgusting" and called the disruption campaign "disgraceful" and insisted he would be instructing the city's solicitor to sue the anti-poverty protesters for the damages.



*Unfortunately, the black bloc does not always get away*

## ATTACK AT THEIR HEART!

*by the Freyheyt Collective (NEFAC-Toronto)*

Shut down, disrupt, and damage Toronto's financial district on October 16, and Ontario's economy through the fall!

On October 16, the economy of the bosses will no longer be permitted to do business as usual. Strike at their cold, callous, empty hearts as they sleep, when they eat, when they rob us, when they jail us -- make them aware by any means that the good days have ended. From this moment on their every waking thought will be on when, where, what, and whom we strike next. On October 16th, thousands will converge in Toronto's financial district to paralyze the center of capital in Canada. Thousands have had enough of token protest and registering dissent, thousands will fight together and win if only for the reasons of necessity and survival, if only for the simple fact that now many upon many thousands can no longer bear to do nothing. The battle lines have been drawn. "Enough is enough!" is our declaration.

We call on all anarchists, anti-authoritarians, anti-capitalists and other allies to form a united anarchist contingent on October 16th and to participate in economic disruption throughout the fall. We call on all so-called "hooligans", "thugs", and "brutes" - everyone pregnant with capitalism's ruin - to converge and destroy the bosses' privilege.

You! We call to you and those with whom you work, run, live, and were imprisoned with. Everyone tired of existing on too little to live and on too much to die. All struck sick with a new contempt, a new dawn to stand firm and be ungovernable. For six years we have suffered vicious state attacks on social welfare, healthcare, housing, and work standards. Even basic water treatment has not escaped the neo-liberal / neo-conservative agenda that the Ontario Tories so arrogantly lead, blazing a path that other provinces and the federal government follow regardless of what parties are in power.

The state alone is not to blame. It is not some abstract bogeyman residing in the dark, it is concrete - as solid as the bricks we hurl-protecting the beast known as capitalism. The policies brought forth by the Progressive Conservatives are the local examples of globalization and the restructuring of international capital. While other countries have been forced to cut social programs because of IMF loan conditions the Progressive Conservative government has energetically and voluntarily done the same in order to make Ontario "open for business". Premier Mike Harris makes it very clear that he sees the real priority in society lying not with the millions of people who need housing, a living wage and clean water but with the largest companies and their profit margins.

We, anarchist and anti-authoritarian revolutionaries, must stand by and fight as the poor and working people of Ontario on October 16th and throughout the fall as we wage a long, hard, uncompromising fight against our class enemies.

This is the anti-capitalist movement becoming pro-active instead of merely reacting to summits, meetings and the bosses schedules. On October 16th and the months to follow Mike Harris and the bosses will lose millions of dollars and a lot of sleep.



# An Anarchist Look at O16 and the Fall Campaign

by Mick (Freyheyt & OCAP)

**TORONTO** - On October 16, 2001, two thousand people disrupted Toronto's financial district through a number of mobile and unpredictable "snake marches" which snared and blocked commuter traffic entering the district. The demonstration began the fall campaign of economic disruption against the provincial government and its neo-liberal, colonialist policies by the Ontario Common Front (OCF), a coalition of 75 organizations across Ontario.

Was the financial district disrupted on October 16th? It undoubtedly was, the snake marches temporarily blocked major routes into the financial district, including major intersections for commuter traffic exiting from the Gardiner Expressway and 401, and underground parking garages. The best weapon we had on Oct. 16th was our unpredictability. Not knowing where the snake marches were going caused lots of companies to advise employees to stay home or rent a hotel room, lock entrances, and cancel business conferences and meetings. The Toronto Transit Commission shut down the subway stops in the district, causing mass delays and confusion on major routes taken by commuters.

Another very effective tactic was used by the People's Community Union (Kingston) as they set up slow rolling vehicle blockades along the 401 and Don Valley Parkway causing massive traffic jams, disrupting the "just-in-time" economy that much of Ontario's industry uses, as well as delaying thousands of commuters entering Toronto. The anti-capitalist caravan ended its tremendously successful action with no arrests or harassment.

## Redefining Militancy and Radicalism

Was the October 16th demonstration "militant"? Was it "radical"? The answer is a resounding yes, furthermore, O16 helped redefine the terms. It was militant in the fact that there was no negotiation with the police and we refused to allow ourselves to be penned into Nathan Philips Square or in the case of the Quebec contingent enter it in the first place. We meet our goals of disrupting the financial district without compromise, or serious casualties. It was radical in its politi-

cal strategy of not protesting the government (or elite summits) but moving towards a movement that disrupts the day-to-day business of capitalism.

The fact that we used tactics that were effective but meant to avoid major battles with the police, and the fact that we were incredibly focused on our goals and self-disciplined was a remarkable step forward for the anarchist movement as we were rapidly moving towards a split between either the irresponsible "anything goes" or the authoritarian "do anything I don't like and you go". Any criticism that it wasn't radical because few windows were broken is easily refuted by pointing out that by that standard the most "radical" demonstration ever was Kristallnacht. Our politics, not our tactics, are what make us radicals.

Importantly, not only did we win tactically we won politically as well. There is little doubt in this writer's mind that a major battle with police or widespread, proactive, property destruction in the financial district would have led to the internal destruction of the Ontario Common Front just as much as cancelling the demo or turning it into just another protest would have. We now have the opportunity to continue building the OCF, improving and formalizing its structure, planning future local work, campaigns and actions, while most importantly building a true counter-power to capitalism, the state and trade union leadership.

On June 15th 2000 we proved we would fight, throughout the year we have proved we can organize, on October 16th 2001 we proved we can be disciplined and win not only in the streets but politically as well. The powers that be are scared of us and rightfully so.

## Anarchist Participation in O16

Anarchist participation in O16 and the OCF took place on two levels. Individual anarchists and collectives affiliated with the Ontario Common Front and worked within the OCF to achieve its goals of economic disruption. The other level that anarchists organized came from the Freyheyt Collective (NEFAC-Toronto) who issued a call for a united anarchist contingent on October 16th and participation in the fall campaign. It is

undoubtedly true that anarchist organizing brought hundreds of people to Toronto from as far away as Washington DC.

The Anarchist contingent, however, was nowhere to be seen on O16. We found ourselves back in the position of yesteryear with a large number of anarchists and anti-authoritarians participating but having no visible or organized presence. What went wrong?

First of all, it was very difficult for the various anarchist affinity groups to even assemble in Nathan Philips Square as the police presence was overwhelming. Our decision to not dress in black also came back to haunt us as the Anarchist Contingent made the decision to abandon its small flags (as people thought that the police would size them and arrest the people carrying them on weapons charges) giving us little visual reference to rally around.

In addition to this a significant number of anarchists, mostly from Quebec, made the correct decision to not enter the square and submit themselves to police searches and potential arrest. The Quebec contingent swelled to about 400 people and decided to start their own snake march into the financial district.

When the Quebec contingent and the main demonstration met up later in the day it was a little easier for anarchists to converge as the Quebec contingent still had a number of red and black flags but overall the day consisted of anarchist affinity groups acting almost invisibly in the larger demonstration bumping into people they knew and forming temporary clusters but not being able to hold it together as a united contingent.

The tactical potential of anarchists went unrealized because without being together in a larger bloc affinity groups were faced with the undesirable choice of either blindly following the masses lead by OCF marshals or dangerously breaking off in very small groups. The lesson I draw from this mobilization is that visual references are essential in keeping an anarchist contingent together and the Black Bloc uniform remains a very useful tool for that purpose. If a situation develops where people are being targeted for wearing black they can always change clothes but it is impossible to stay together in large numbers during highly mobile and unpredictable situations without visible references such as the Black Bloc uniform.



## The Fall Campaign After O16

The tone set for the October 16th demo was a good one tactically and politically. However, it seems that the targeting of the financial district has set a strategic tone as well that is not effective for a campaign of economic disruption. The demonstrations that have followed in Hamilton, Belleville and Sudbury have mirrored the strategy of marching and disrupting the downtown core of their respective cities. This is a loss of potential that deeply saddens me and requires critique.

In Toronto, during initial discussions about how Toronto would participate in a campaign of economic disruption, it was decided that downtown Toronto's main role in the provincial economy was one of administration. Drawing from the global May Day demonstrations the Toronto Common Front made the decision to target the heart of Canadian capitalism on Bay St. From a provincial and local perspective this was a great target not enough thought seemed to have been put into how disrupting this somewhat abstract target, instead of one at a point of production or distribution, would effect the rest of the campaign.

While targeting the business district in Toronto was a great idea, targeting the business districts of smaller communities seems like the unoriginal thinking that the OCF campaign was trying to break out of. By correctly stating that ending the day-to-day business of "Canada's wall street" was economic disruption it lead other OCF locals to decide that disrupting their largely insignificant downtown core was equivalent to blockading railway lines, factories, highways, and major local industry. This has made the OCF campaign more of a traditional protest movement than a campaign of economic disruption.

## Where Was Labor?

The Labor movement has been absent from the fall campaign in any significant way. There has been no workplace actions, slowdowns, or strikes related to the Ontario Common Front. This is in sharp contrast to the hope and the hype that the Unions and the Ontario Common Front had for mass workplace actions and a general strike, what happened?

The rise of the Ontario Common Front in the labor movement was done quite effectively by by-passing the national and provincial labor leadership and going directly to union locals and local labor councils. Coupled with the rise of autonomous rank and file flying

# Fight the Repression of the State!

On October 16, in Toronto, over 40 people were arrested during the shutdown of the financial district coordinated by the Ontario Common Front. Many were arrested for minor charges such as "breach of peace" and "disorderly conduct," however a number of people also face very severe charges. These include five comrades from the Red and Anarchist Skinheads (RASH) Montreal group, a supporter group of the Northeastern Federation of Anarcho-Communists (NEFAC). The charges include "attempt to manufacture explosives," "weapons dangerous," and others. Their car was searched by police, who allegedly found a couple of empty bottles, some rags and a piece of hose they claimed were parts intended to make Molotov cocktails. Solidarity is urgently needed now! Specifically, money for legal costs is desperately needed.

For more information, to offer support, or to donate money for the general post-O16 legal defense, please email the Common Front Legal Committee at: [commonfront-legal@tao.ca](mailto:commonfront-legal@tao.ca). To contribute towards the defense of RASH-Mtl members, they suggest cash donations through certified mail to: RASH-Mtl, PO Box 491, Montreal P.Q., H2L 4K4, Canada. RASH can also be contacted by email at: [rashmtl@hotmail.com](mailto:rashmtl@hotmail.com).

squads organized by union militants and the push for workplace actions from Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) local 3903 at the CUPE Ontario convention. Everyone's hopes were that the Labour movement would join the radical left in ending the long retreat of our respective movements.

One of the most crippling blows against labour participation was the attack on Canadian Auto Workers (CAW) flying squads by the CAW national executive after the OCAP eviction of Ontario finance minister Jim Flaherty from his office in Whitby Ontario. The CAW executive took the opportunity that presented itself as the controversial action (due to minor amount of property destruction that happened) involved participation of CAW flying squad members. The National Executive withdrew its annual donation to OCAP of \$10,000 but more importantly declared that all future CAW flying squad actions needed approval from the national executive. The CAW flying squads were, unfortunately, still in the building phase and did not have the necessary counter power in the union to be able to take on the national executive.

For all the tough talk that came out of CUPE Ontario, and participation in O16 by a number of CUPE flying squads notwithstanding, the union failed to organize a single workplace action. As far back as June CUPE Ontario president Sid Ryan had claimed that CUPE flying squads would, unannounced, shut down workplaces that were considered unsafe. CUPE National president Judy Darcy had issued calls for mass confrontations in the streets and workplace at the CUPE Ontario convention, claiming that CUPE members would organize into affinity groups equipped with gas masks to confront the police.

Labor's power, however, lies not in organizing people to take the streets, it lies in the ability to directly shutdown and occupy workplaces. The fact that, as a whole, organized labor did neither for the OCF campaign shows that the Labor movement remains firmly in retreat or is arguably a reactionary force. As one anarchist youth put it "It's ridiculous that the class struggle is being left to a handful of us punk-ass kids to fight in the street."

## Where From Here For OCAP and the OCF?

Locally, OCAP should re-focus its work on the day-to-day concerns of Toronto's poor people. For example, the winter is coming and like every winter in Toronto people will freeze to death on the streets. We still need affordable housing and if the city won't provide it then we should take it. OCAP needs to spend most of its energy on direct-action casework. If there is any major organizing that OCAP should do provincially it is in setting up OCAP branches in communities across the province and conducting workshops on how to do casework. A more formal and accountable provincial structure is needed if OCAP is to successfully grow outside of Toronto, which may be the best and longest lasting contribution to class struggle that comes out of the OCF fall campaign.

The way forward for the OCF as a whole is to formalize the structure of the OCF to distribute the work and costs among OCF member-organizations and ensure that the decisions of the OCF are made in a democratic and accountable way.

Let us make no mistake, the fall campaign is only the beginning, we will end the retreat and we will fight until we win.



# Mass Arrests at Demonstration for Palestinian Rights

**MONTREAL** - On September 29, over 500 people took to the streets in downtown Montreal for a demonstration called for by Solidarity for Palestinian Human Rights (SPHR). The demo ended early in the evening with more than eighty arrests.

The September 29th demo was initially supposed to take place on September 16th to commemorate the massacres of refugee camps Sabra and Chatilla, which happened during the Israeli army's invasion of Lebanon, in 1982. The SPHR decided to push back the date because of the general panic and upgraded security measures due to the September 11th attacks. SPHR was also being threatened by, among others, the obscure 'Comite for the Extermination of Palestine'.

As the march got under way, tensions went up a notch when a group of Zionist provocateurs tried to prevent people from turning on Ste-Catherine's street. Members of the march's security crew interposed themselves in front of the provocateurs who then left while

police were about to intervene.

Other demonstrators gathered at Philips square under anti-globalization banners to protest as part of the international day of action against the IMF and the World Bank, joined the pro-Palestinian march to swell its ranks. The united march then headed to the U.S. consulate on St-Alexandre Street. A lot of protesters were disappointed that the demo just headed right by the consulate, and not stop in front of it, as it is custom in most Montreal demonstrations.

Later, the official end of the march was announced in a west-end park. Then, about 100 people decided to retake the streets. A U.S. flag was burnt while passing by the U.S. consulate for a second time. Small actions were made along the route: a bit of graffiti, a bit of damage done to some election campaign signs. These are the small, relatively inoffensive acts that the cops invoked as motives for the arrest of 80 people.

Slightly past 7 pm, riot police arrived out of nowhere and trapped the remaining

demonstrators along with passerbys on tiny Montcalm Street, between Ste-Catherine's and De Maisonneuve. Police gave no warning or dispersal order. SPCUM agents (Montreal's police force) didn't meet any resistance on the part of the demonstrators, most of them wanting to get to the nearest subway station to go home.

Everybody arrested was charged with "disturbing the peace" and handcuffed with sadly famous plastic "tie-wrap" handcuffs before being sent off by bus to detention center Centre Opérationnel Sud. Many had to wait no less than 3 hours before getting off the bus, which acted as a temporary jail-cell. Once inside C-O Sud, the arrestees were forced to kneel down in the garage while waiting to be searched for a second time.

A group of supporters of the arrested demonstrators, gathered in front of the detention center, were threatened with arrest for "unlawful assembly". All were eventually released with fines or court dates.

## Police Violently Evict Montreal Squatters

**MONTREAL** - On October 4, dozens of riot police violently evicted at least 40 individuals who have been squatting for two months at a former youth center in the Rosemont neighborhood of east end Montreal. There are unconfirmed reports that a SWAT team also participated in the operation.

The police arrived without notice, forcibly entered the building, and violently compelled the residents to leave. Many squatters were not even able to obtain their belongings, including their shoes and clothes. According to squatters and their spokespersons, many people inside the building were beaten with batons and police fists. One squatter was shot with a taser gun at least twice and lost consciousness. According to eyewitnesses, he was trying to grab his backpack. Other people reportedly suffered concussions as a result of police blows, and there are at least two reported hospitalizations. At least six people, five men and one woman, were arrested in the eviction on charges of "resisting police" and "obstruction".

The squatters and many supporters, who quickly mobilized to the site, were forced away from the squat at the corner of Prefontaine and Rachel streets by a squad

of helmeted and baton-wielding riot police. Meanwhile, a large number of curious onlookers, who in the past two months have congregated to the squat site, watched the police action.

At the evicted squat site, workers have boarded up the building, and about 20 private security guards have replaced the police and are maintaining a constant presence.

For the last two months, at least 50 squatters and their supporters have been making the Prefontaine Center their home, as well as a meeting space for street youth and local activists. The Prefontaine Center -- a City-owned building that has been empty for years -- was won after a five-day occupation of a downtown heritage building. The gain of the large four-story building was widely hailed as a victory for squatter's rights in Montreal, Quebec and Canada.

The original Overdale Squat was abandoned for at least 13 years until it was brought back to life by a large-scale public squatting action that involved 400 people. The squat action of July 27 -- organized by the Comite des sans-emplois anti-poverty group -- gained widespread public awareness and sympathy to the issue of homeless-

ness and inadequate housing in Montreal.

The Prefontaine Center quickly became a laboratory for communal living, as well as a launching pad for alternative projects such as a community garden and compost, free school, communal kitchen and proposed printing press. It was also a convergence point for many street youth in Montreal, and a strategizing center on the issue of homelessness and social housing. In addition to youth, the squat also was home to a few families, including several small children.

Originally, Mayor Pierre Bourque's office had promised, in writing, to allow the new squat to be run by the squatters, without police interference. Heat, water and rent were to be free-of-cost, and the site was to be self-managed. However, the Mayor's attitude changed a month ago, and for at least the last three weeks, the City has been looking for ways to evict the squatters. Until yesterday morning, the City had not been able to find a legal pretext for eviction. And, in the case of building problems, the building's landlord -- the City of Montreal -- was ultimately responsible for improvements.

The Mayor rejected any sort of compromise with the squatters, and wanted to put this affair behind as he prepares for the municipal elections in early November. In the dismissive words of the Mayor, "[The squatters'] aim was anti-globalization and they were against our system . . . and capitalism."



**BOSTON** - Following the police murder of anarchist militant Carlo Giuliani during the G8 protests in Genoa, Italy, an emergency solidarity demonstration was called for in Boston in front of the Italian consulate on July 23. A crowd of seventy gathered at the consulate to voice their outrage and disgust over the treatment of protesters at the hands of the Italian police and carabinieri. Towards the end of the demonstration, two paint bombs were allegedly lobbed at the doorway and building facade.

Moments later Boston Police and Federal agents had arrested two local anarchists, both members of the Sabate Anarchist Collective. Despite the relatively minor acts that the two were accused of committing, they were each charged with a staggering nine felonies (three counts of "assault and battery with a dangerous weapon," and six counts of "destruction of property over \$250"), and one misdemeanor ("disturbing the peace").

It subsequently became apparent that as known anarchists and long-time activists,

## Boston Anarchists Face Serious Charges

both cases were being given "special attention" by the authorities. While in custody, all clothing (other than boxer shorts) was confiscated for "evidence". One of the accused was informally questioned by police on several occasions, and was asked directly if he was an anarchist and if he knew any of the protesters who were in Genoa. Bail was initially set at \$25,000 each - payable in cash only.

The following morning, during the bail hearing, both were brought in front of the judge chained and shackled, barefoot, and dressed only in their boxer shorts and a hospital gurney. A group of friends and supporters had gathered, and were video taped by Federal agents who were prominently and visibly spread throughout the courtroom and surrounding hallways. One supporter, an anarchist and friend of the accused, was approached by an undercover cop and

placed under arrest for a warrant dating back to early 1997. Though she was cleared a few hours later of any wrong-doing, she had not given her name to anyone in the courthouse; she was visually identified, presumably from intelligence files, and approached by a Federal agent using her first name.

Although the two accused are out on bail, the fight is far from over. If convicted of all the charges against them, they will realistically be facing up to six years in prison! Adding to their worries is the current political climate, which is expected to make it that much easier to persecute political dissidents.

For information on how you can donate legal funds, extend solidarity, or receive updates on their cases, contact:

Sabate Anarchist Collective,  
PO Box 230685, Boston, MA 02123



## Anti-Capitalist Convergence Against the World Economic Forum

**NEW YORK CITY** - For years now, the CEOs of major corporations, hundreds of top international government officials and just plain rich people have been meeting every year in Davos, Switzerland. This is where the real rulers of the world give the politicians their marching orders. This is where the schemes that lead to atrocities like GATT and the WTO are actually hatched. And this year, the dining club for the world ruling class will be held at the Waldorf Astoria hotel in Midtown Manhattan.

The WEF is moving here because they were effectively chased out of Switzerland by a concerted campaign of direct action. This is a provocation. While thousands of New Yorkers are still burying their dead, trying to patch together shattered lives, and desperately trying to see how they can continue to pay insanely high New York City rents after being laid off from their jobs, the richest and most powerful people on earth have decided to come and party on the wreckage - to celebrate, no doubt, the billions of dollars of taxpayer money they've just been handed by their respective governments and explore

new opportunities to profiteer from permanent global warfare. Do they think we have no pride? No self-respect? That we're just going to sit back and let this happen?

We are calling for for a joyous, creative resistance to the WEF's stifling grey culture of corporate conformity; actions whose diversity of tactics will reflect the rich diversity of our city's communities. We are calling for actions based on principles of non-hierarchy, passionate opposition to patriarchy, white supremacy, and rule-by-elite, and the vision of a world in which no one has to live in fear or daily terror. We are calling for a world in which states and their wars, the economic violence and insecurity promulgated by their corporate overlords, the hideous legacy of 500 years of colonialism and racism, and the violence and intolerance of every kind of crusader and religious fanatic will finally be banished from this earth. Strike back against corporate terror!

**Waldorf Astoria Hotel, NYC  
January 31-February 4**

## Celebrate Sabate! Celebrate Resistance!

**WASHINGTON, DC** - On January 5th 1960, revolutionary anarchist, Sabate was shot crossing back into Spain from France. In memory of him and countless others who would not give up the fight, who would not listen to 'now is not the time', who continued despite oppression and pain, we invite you to a festival and action in the spirit of anarchism and class war in Washington DC!

January 5 - starts off at 9am! A day of fun events including a bookfair, movie showings (not your typical action videos-something a little different but great), veggie/vegan eats, defense training classes, games (such as Bash A Fash!), music, sewing circle, and much more!

January 6 - day of action- in celebration of resistance against capitalism and militarism, there will be a manifestation showing that we will not hide or disappear, that we will take action!

For more information, please contact:

Tute Nere Collective  
PO Box 645  
Riverdale, MD  
email: tute\_nere@hotmail.com



# Defending the Uprising at Concordia University

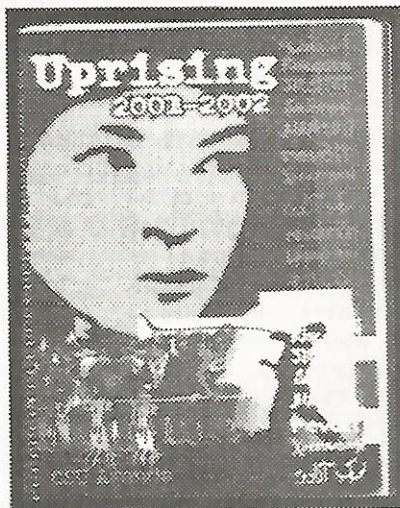
**MONTREAL** - Over the past three years, students at Concordia University have elected leftwing representatives to their student union.

Every year there has been controversy over the confrontational tactics of direct action, leftwing (even anti-capitalist) student publications, and the willingness of the student union to take a stand on international human rights issues. Every year the Concordia administration has criticized the Concordia Student Union (CSU) activists for their lack of decorum, and has arbitrarily thrown its representatives off of University bodies.

The Fall of 2001 looked like it was going to be more of the same. Two elected CSU representatives, VP Internal Laith Morouf and Councilor Tom Keefer, were expelled by rectorial decree one month after some graffiti was painted on University property followed by a minor confrontation with security guards.

The CSU had produced a student agenda, UPRISING 2001-2002, that was generating debate about the Israeli occupation, racism on campus, and the human rights violations that certain Concordia-connected corporations were profiting from.

Then came September 11th, 2001. Suddenly, defenders of Palestinian human rights like Keefer and Marouf became "terrorists".



Suddenly the revolutionary art and poetry contained in UPRISING had become "violent". Suddenly the CSU itself became a "terrorist organization" with connections to Osama bin Laden himself!

On October 1, a press conference was held where the B'nai Brith's executive director encour-

aged students to rip out certain pages of their agendas without reading them. He was even so bold as to ask of UPRISING: "...is this a blueprint for Osama bin Laden's youth program in North America?"

The fact that this question could even be asked is scary enough. The fact that it was reprinted in the mainstream media is downright terrifying. "Is bin Laden queer positive?"

Does he support women's rights and contraception? Because that is what UPRISING is all about," says CSU President Sabrina Stea.

But it is more than the student agenda that is under attack. There is another uprising that many students are now struggling to defend - the uprising that has mobilized thousands of students to successfully fight fee increases and the privatization of education at Concordia, to fight for human rights around the world, and to fight for the right to express controversial ideas in student publications.

The fight is being waged by the recently revived Coalition for Student Action. The Coalition's Aimee van Drimmelen explains that the first hurdle to be overcome is mass media induced hysteria, "After the events of September 11, people have been bombarded with mainstream media propaganda that has rallied them to ban together against an 'enemy' - Arab and Muslim people and people critical of war and racism. This means that there is an equation of activism and terrorism in some minds. As Bush says, 'You either are with us, or you're with the terrorists.'"

Concordia students are now trying to carve out a space for themselves in which they can be against Bush and against the terrorists (and a space where they can be able to question whether there is even much of a difference between the two!).

## The Festival del Pueblo!

A Five-Day Celebration of Resistance, of Community, and of Freedom, May 1-5, Boston

The purpose of this festival is multifaceted. Firstly, it is a conscious attempt to build links between those involved in the "protest movement" and so-called "ordinary people;" a deliberate move away from summit-hopping towards more community oriented initiatives, without compromising the militant flavor of large mobilizations. It is a recognition of the need to reconcile the emerging anti-capitalist movement with the day to day struggles of our own communities and workplaces. It is also a recognition that the myriad of different issues and struggles, ranging from environmental to labor, can all be attributed to one root cause: capitalism.

Furthermore, because we are not flocking to a gathering of the elite, but instead act-

ing on our own initiative, it is a convergence of a proactive nature, rather than a reactive one. As such, it is an opportunity for us to set the tone, thus dictating the when, where, and why of the convergence.

Finally, by encouraging a wide variety of cultural and social events, we hope to strengthen the culture of resistance by providing opportunities for individuals and groups from across North America (and hopefully beyond) to interact, socialize, and share ideas.

The Festival del Pueblo Includes: Anarchist Bookfair and Free School, Debates, Workshops, Trainings, Homebrew Festival, Radical Film Fest, Picnics, Soccer and Basketball Tournaments, 3 nights of rev-

olutionary music (punk, hip-hop, folk, jazz), Community Carnival (featuring "Dunk the Landlord" and "Pin the badge on the pig" booths, and much more!)

We are looking for radical and anti-authoritarian groups to get involved by endorsing the event, tabling, organizing workshops, submitting movies, or helping to organize any of the many street events (marches, carnival, direct action, etc.) We welcome new ideas and initiatives. To get involved, or for more information, please contact the Festival del Pueblo General Assembly at:

Festival del Pueblo c/o Barricada  
PO Box 73, Boston, MA, 02133, USA  
email: FestivaldelPueblo@hotmail.com



# Anarchy in the Northeast: New Anarchist Collectives in the Region

## WASHINGTON, DC

The Tute Nere Collective formed in August 2001. After some reflection on the past few years of actions in the anarchist movement, we found it was time that a more militant women's collective formed up. There are four members in the core collective, all women, but we work closely with countless groups, both men and women, here and abroad, and have a group of about 5-6 core contributors.

Tute Nere grows from the basic principles of Class War, and the need to abolish the capitalist system that creates hierarchical class structure that in turn creates and maintains racism, fascism, sexism, homophobia, and that same concentration of wealth. We are dedicated to taking direct action against institutions of government, capitalism, and oppression, in whatever forms that might take on, and supporting all other collectives and groups that practice revolutionary violence and are continuing the struggle for a classless, stateless society.

We currently put out a monthly magazine and distribute class war and anarchist-feminist literature, as well as screen some rather unique and popular t-shirt designs to raise money for various comrades and to keep ourselves going. We are also working on a festival and action here in Washington, DC, on the weekend of January 5-6, which will include an all day carnival, bookfair, and a demonstration against capitalism and war.

Tute Nere Collective  
PO Box 645  
Riverdale, MD 20738  
email: tute\_nere@hotmail.com

## WESTERN MASSACHUSETTS

The Valley Anarchist Organization, a collective in Western Massachusetts, was formed after a call was put out in the early months of 2001. VAO has approximately 15 members and has recently opened its doors to new members. VAO is organized around a main collective body, which acts as a coordinating group and a resource for new members, then different project groups that focus on varying project. This allows maximum participation by other interested activists who

are not "members" of VAO, while simultaneously maintaining the groups explicitly Anarchist politics and collective structure.

VAO's biggest project of late was to organize the highly acclaimed New England Anarchist Bookfair. The bookfair was a successful coming out party for VAO, and surely will lead to bigger and better projects. Currently, Valley Anarchist Organization is participating in an anti-war demo at a local airforce base, working on a radical soap opera, a free school (to be held at the Flywheel Arts Space in Easthampton, MA), a radical film series with films to be shown the last Thursday of every month for all of 2002, a study group analyzing the new book *Empire*, and organizing an event for May Day.

From the VAO mission statement: "As anarchists we seek to creatively engage our communities, challenge all forms of domination, and support individual and collective efforts to promote freedom and equality in all areas of life."

Valley Anarchist Organization  
PO Box 2252  
Amherst, MA 01004  
email: anarchobook@yahoo.com  
<http://www.homemadejam/vao/index.html>

## BOSTON

Sofia Perovskaya Collective is a newly formed NEFAC collective in Boston. At present, we are made of 5 members (2 female, 3 male). The collective is currently a NEFAC supporter, and is applying for membership at the February conference.

We will be working on educational propaganda that is community based, and that not only targets anarchist circles. We have started a biweekly study group to discuss anarchist theory and organizing tactics, with the first meeting bringing in 16 people, many

of whom are not anarchists (yet). Some members of the collective are highly involved in BAAM (Boston Anarchists Against Militarism) and the Festival Del Pueblo, and we are working on a project to get the Boston anarchist community more involved in working class politics.

Sofia Perovskaya was a Russian anarchist who was a member of the Chaikovsky Circle, and, later, The People's Will. She was hung alongside four other members of this group for the bombing assassination of Czar Alexander II in 1881.

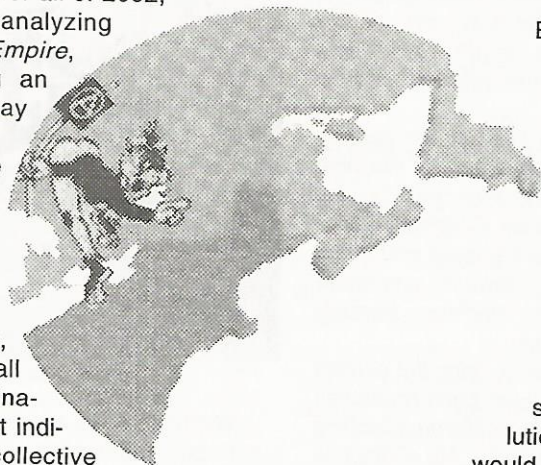
Sofia Perovskaya Collective  
PO Box 230055  
Boston, MA, 02123

## TORONTO

The Black Toutha is a Toronto-based anarchist collective, founded from an anarchist affinity group for O16. We are based primarily on achieving a higher social and personal evolution (and revolution). We would like to create a world in which there are no limits and people are free to evolve as much as possible.

Our main goals are to set up free spaces, recognized as anarchist autonomous zones, and to fight for everyone's freedom and happiness. In the short term, we are determined in our struggle to bring the world closer, step by step, to utopia. We will fight police and government repression, and try to revive the spirit that has been dampened by all this repression. We were involved in the anarchist mobilization around the G8 meetings in Ottawa, and are planning a series of street parties to try and motivate people, as well as something big in protest of Bill C-36.

The Black Toutha  
email: blacktoutha@yahoo.ca  
<http://www.blacktoutha.org>





# Why Anarchists Oppose War and Nationalism

by the Boston Anarchists Against Militarism (BAAM)

*For there never has been, and there is no doubt - and today's horrific events reinforce this confidence - that war is permanently incubating within the existing body of society and that armed conflict, be it specific or general...is the natural consequence and necessary inescapable destiny of a regime founded on the economic inequality of its citizens, relying upon the unbridled clash of interests, and placing the world of labor under the narrow, painful oversight of a minority of parasites, who hold both political power and economic might. War was inevitable, from whatever quarter, it simply had to come.*

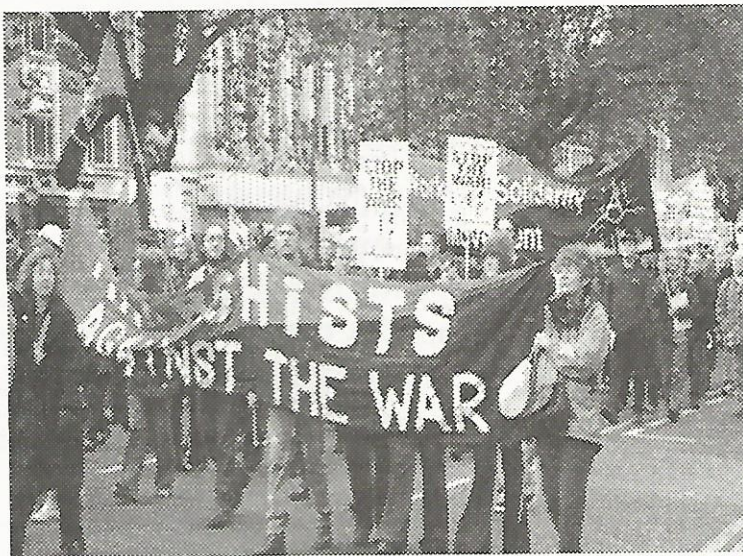
*Not for nothing has the last half century been spent on feverish preparation of the most formidable armaments and every passing day seen the death budget swell. Continual refinement of war materials, every mind and every will kept constantly geared towards ever better organization of the military machine - scarcely the way to work for peace.*

*So it is naive and puerile, once the causes and occasions of strife have been multiplied to try to define the degree of blame attaching to such and such government. No distinction is possible between offensive and defensive wars. It is for whoever stands on each side who will produce the most unchallengeable, most telling documentation to prove their bona fides and portray themselves as the unblemished defender of the right and of freedom, the champion of freedom.*

This statement, made by the Italian anarchist Errico Malatesta in reference to World War I, is just as accurate and poignant today as it was seventy-five years ago. He saw that there were many links to be drawn between capitalism, nationalism, racism, and the state's perpetuation of the war machine. Many things remain unchanged between the time of Malatesta and today.

As anarchists, we stand against terrorism in all its forms, and make no distinction between terror used by religious extremists, capitalist exploiters, or the State. We view this current militarist action against the Afghani people as another example of the terrorism perpetuated by the United States government. The American military has con-

tinually been used to fight against the freedom of other people around the world and thereby ensuring American wealth, and the current war effort is no exception.



Anarchist demonstration against the war in Ireland

We have seen examples of state terrorism throughout history.

- the American aggression in Vietnam, fought under the guise of "ensuring democracy" and fighting communism;
- the US military and financial backing of the Israeli occupation of the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and the City of Jerusalem, and the subsequent crime against the Palestinian people;
- the ongoing bombing and sanctions against the people of Iraq;
- the American concentration camps, erected to detain and persecute thousands of Japanese-Americans after the bombing of Pearl Harbor;
- the US sponsored military dictatorships in the Latin American countries of Argentina, Chile, Uruguay, Brazil, Guatemala (and others) who have "disappeared" or killed hundreds of thousands of people.

The anarchist position is not, and has never been, one of neutrality or pacifism. We have always rejected capitalism and State Communism, fascist dictatorships and puppet regimes established by colonial empires. Here too we reject both the misogynistic

Taliban rulers and the horrific American military aggression. We choose to side, rather, with the victims of both of these states - with the millions of Afghan peasants left to starve by the Taliban, displaced by the threat of American aggression, and sure to become collateral damage in American attacks; and with the billions of working class people across the world trapped in poverty by the American empire. Every action taken in the name of "America" - national security, the health of the economy, anything - is done for the benefit of this ruling elite.

Nationalism and racism are enemies of the working class (which, incidentally, is primarily composed of women and people of color). We have seen in the months since September 11th, an incredible increase in racist and xenophobic attacks. To give a few examples of this trend:

The FBI detention of nearly 1,000 people for alleged "terrorist" acts. In Mesa, Arizona, Balbir Singh Sodhi, 49, an Indian gas station owner was shot. The assailant then drove to another service station where a Lebanese-American employee was working; he fired shots but injured no one else. In Richmond Hill, Queens, an elderly Sikh man was beaten with a baseball bat; two others were shot at with paintball guns. In Gary, Indiana, a man in a ski mask fired more than 21 shots from a high-powered assault rifle at Hassan Awdah, a U.S. citizen born in Yemen, who stood behind a 1-inch-thick shield. In Huntington, N.Y., a 75-year-old man tried to run over a Pakistani woman in a shopping mall parking lot. The police said he screamed that he was "doing this for my country." The man then followed the woman into a store and threatened to



kill her for "destroying my country." A well-dressed young Manhattan couple yelled insults at a Lebanese-American who was desperately searching for survivors from the arts center he had run on the 92nd floor of the World Trade Center's north tower. "They told me, 'You should go back to your country, you fucking Arabs, we should bomb the shit out of you,'" said the man, Moukhtar Kocache. Forty-three percent of Americans said they thought the attacks would make them "personally more suspicious" of people who appear to be of Arab descent. (ABCNEWS/ Washington Post poll: 9/13)

Please keep in mind that all of those incidents occurred within 9 days of the world trade center attack. As we all know, there has been a dramatic increase in violence against Arabs, Moslems, and people of Middle Eastern decent (and people perceived to be members of those ethnic and

religious groups). This increase in violence is directly linked to the rise in nationalism. Nationalism, patriotism and these racist attacks are all being fueled by the fear and powerlessness felt by Americans since the events of September 11th. Once again, we see nationalism being used as a tool to get the working class to identify with the methodology and militarism of the State. Nationalism is used to subvert class struggle and create tension within the working class.

We anarchists extend our full solidarity to those currently under racist attack as a result of the nationalist backlash, and will actively take part in any defense of these communities if necessary, all the while respecting their autonomy and self-determination. We will promote, as always, anti-racist and international working class solidarity as our strongest weapon against the global ruling classes and their wars.

We oppose this war because it does not

offer any hope of liberation. The liberal analysis of 'Operation Enduring Freedom' presents the alternatives of war and peace. We reject this view and offer the alternatives: on the one hand, the spiral of imperialist aggression, and on the other hand, the rising up of the oppressed against the oppressor. Now is not the time to practice defeatism and retreat in the face of overwhelming and misguided "patriotism."

We are not interested in merely putting an end to the bombings and then return to the status quo, either in the US or in Afghanistan. We want to offer an alternative, an egalitarian, classless, stateless society based on the principles of mutual aid, self determination, and cooperation, free from all forms of hierarchy and domination.

We must make our opposition to this war and capitalism loud and clear. The only road to freedom is the path of revolutionary struggle.

# Social War By Other Means

I believe it was Clausewitz who said that war was simply politics carried out by other means. I think that the reverse is a truer expression of social reality. Politics is simply the social war carried out using less bloody means. If we consider that it is always the ruling class and its lackeys who call for social peace, demanding that the exploited and excluded refrain from violence in dealing with their social condition, it becomes obvious that social peace is simply part of the strategy of the social war. For this reason, the peace movement must be rejected as a way of dealing with the current American call for war.

The peace movement is based on an ideology of nonviolence, a pacifist moral stance that ignores the reality of social relationships. Rather than examining real relationships of power, of domination and exploitation, it simply demands that the state continue to carry out its functions, but without violence, without bloodshed. But what are those functions? Are they not the maintenance of order, the protection of property, the enforcement (selective, of course) of the rule of law? And such activity could only be necessary if there are those who find that this social order does not meet their needs, does not offer them the lives they desire,

puts them in the position of having to choose between resigned acceptance of often unbearable conditions or defiance of the rules and a constant battle of wits or arms against the dominant world. But these excluded ones did not begin this social war.

The ruling class has always used violence or the threat of violence to lay claim to all of our lives. If the democratic regimes have managed to create a more sophisticated method of participatory domination, this does not change the fact that behind the ballot there is always the bullet to guarantee the maintenance of social peace, which is thus clearly the public face of the social war that keeps most of us passively in our places even claiming to be content with this obedience that is called freedom. So whether the state goes about its activities peacefully or through blatant violence, it is still carrying out the policy of the social war that keeps us in our place.

In this light, the pacifist protests become a farce. The demand that the American state and the states of the rest of the world carry on their current "war against terrorism" peacefully assumes that the state should indeed exist, and thus that the violence implicit in the present social order should continue--the violence that kills millions daily

whether from starvation like in northern Africa and numerous other places, from poisoning by pollution and processed foods, accidents on the job, new, increasingly virulent diseases, the spiritual desolation of the culture of the market or the bullets of the state's uniformed guard dogs. The current "war against terrorism" is nothing other than the continuation of the daily policy of low level terror used by the state to guarantee we stay in line. It matters little whether the state uses bloody or bloodless means. The result is the same: our lives are not our own and we die, sooner or later without ever having really fully lived.

Opposition to the current war can only make sense as opposition to the entire social order from which it has arisen. Such opposition cannot spring from a movement dedicated to nonviolence. Pacifism ultimately serves the state's ends by making us blind to the nature of the state. Against the violence of terrorism, the violence of war, the violence of the state, it is necessary to embrace revolutionary violence - the complete upheaval of all social relationships that maintain the institutional violence of those who rule us. We want neither their war, nor their peace, but their destruction.

**AGAINST PACIFISM,  
AGAINST MILITARISM,  
AGAINST TERRORISM,  
AGAINST THE STATE**

*reprinted from Willful Disobedience,  
Autumn 2001*



# The Tragedy of Afghanistan

by Chekov Feeney

Afghanistan is a tragic country. The Soviet-backed coup and subsequent invasion in 1979 ushered in more than two decades of brutal war. During the 1980's, the US supplied at least \$32 billion of military aid to the mujahadeen, the Islamic opposition to the Soviet regime. The US explicitly channeled their funding to the most fanatical and violent Islamists in an attempt to cause the maximum damage to the Russians.

When the Soviets withdrew in 1989, the Western states turned their attention away from this barren wasteland. While the US had been willing to pump billions of dollars of weapons into the country, their concern for the oppressed population did not extend to the same generosity in funding reconstruction. The UNHCR's budget for Afghanistan in 1999 - as part of the Common UN Appeal for Afghanistan - was \$17 million. The decade after the Soviet retreat was dominated by constant war as the heavily armed warlords fought it out for the meager resources of this forgotten land.

During the past 20 years about 2.5 million Afghans have died as a direct or indirect result of the war - army assaults, famine or lack of medical attention. This makes up over 10% of the population or one death every 5 minutes. Those who have survived have often been maimed by bombs and landmines. A sign at the Dogharoon border post reads: "every 24 hours 7 people step on mines in Afghanistan". UN estimates in 2000 put the average life expectancy of Afghans at 41, and since then this has undoubtedly sharply declined. Afghan children have one chance in five of dying before their second birthday. Increasing repression has accompanied the slaughter, and women in particular have found themselves even further

excluded from public life and locked in the prison of the home by the fundamentalist ideology of the 'holy warriors.'



*Execution of Afghan woman by the Taliban, filmed by RAWA*

## Refugee

According to UN statistics the number of Afghan refugees living in Iran and Pakistan is 6.3 million or one refugee every minute over 20 years. These people have fled despite the fact that all they can look forward to is a life of misery in one of the squalid and hopeless camps across the border. So during this period of war some 10% of the population has been killed and 30% have been forced into exile, a tragedy on a monumental scale and one that has been almost totally ignored by the West.

In the last year the harsh situation has become dramatically worse. The worst drought in 30 years has seen the virtual extermination of the country's only productive resort - their livestock. Famine and starvation are sweeping through the land.

The UNHCR estimates that there are at least one million Afghans starving to death at the moment. Now even the last chances of survival for many of these appear to have disappeared as the neighboring countries are refusing entry to refugees and deporting

'illegal' immigrants. The Iranian filmmaker Mohsen Makhmalbaf is one of the rare outsiders who has taken an interest in this disaster zone: "I witnessed about 20,000 men, women and children around the city of Herat starving to death. They couldn't walk and were scattered on the ground awaiting the inevitable... In Dushanbeh (in Tajikistan) I saw a scene where 100,000 Afghans were running from south to north, on foot. It looked like doomsday. These scenes are never shown in the media anywhere in the world. The war-stricken and hungry children had run for miles and miles barefoot. Later on the same fleeing crowd was attacked by internal enemies and was also refused asylum in Tajikistan. In the thousands, they died in a no-man's land between Afghanistan and Tajikistan and neither you found out nor anybody else".

Afghanistan is fast becoming a vast extermination camp, with armed guards on all the exits so that nobody can escape.

## The Taliban

The Taliban leaders were formed in Islamic religious schools while refugees in Pakistan, and have continued to recruit students to these schools based mainly upon the fact that they offer bread and the only education available to the hungry masses. If the 'civilized' world had spent a tiny fraction of the billions of military funding on providing food and rational education to these victims, it is very unlikely that the Taliban would ever have existed as a serious force. Instead they channeled funds through Saudi Arabia and aid organizations such as USAID, into these religious schools (although they would more accurately be described as political training camps for a movement based upon hatred and fanaticism).

However, they flourished and as they progressively took over between 1994 and 1998, they were generally accepted by the



populace, at least among their fellow Pashtuns, who saw in them the most realistic hope of security, albeit at the expense of freedom. The dead have little freedom anyway. They were formed explicitly as a reaction to the rule of warlords, a return to 'pure,' unifying religion'. They were well-organized, relatively free from complicity in most of the hated warfare and drug trading of the previous 15 years and were relatively well educated in this country where rural illiteracy runs as high as 90%.

However, while the Taliban's harsh regime initially appeared capable of offering some hope of security and stability, Afghans quickly learned that they could expect more of the same brutality. The Taliban forces indulged in massacres in the towns which 'welcomed them' (the euphemism which they use to describe their conquests of opposition towns). In 1998 the Iranian consular staff was among the thousands of people massacred after the fall of Mazar-i Sharif to the Taliban.

They come from Afghanistan's largest tribes, the Pashtun who make up about 35% of the population. They have been accused of brutally imposing their harsh religious laws on other tribes, but it is women who have suffered most at the hands of their horrific religious regime.

While they may have largely failed in their promise to provide security and peace, their failure to provide food and work for the population is at least as important. The Taliban have, like all governments, concentrated primarily on supplying their own forces. So now during this time of mass famine they are the only people with food and resources. The fundamentalists' blatant attacks on women and individual liberties might have been tolerated by the people of this traditionally patriarchal and strictly religious society, if they were able to provide bread and safety. However, there were no solutions to these problems in the Taliban's religious code, and their abject failure to even address the economic problems of the people cost them any real support amongst Afghans. As the Revolutionary Association of Women of Afghanistan (RAWA) state: "The people of Afghanistan have nothing to do with Osama and his accomplices [they] have no plans for socioeconomic reconstruction.

Nor do they have a decent concept for the country".

The Taliban have constantly faced serious opposition in Afghanistan, especially from the marginalized non-Pashtun peoples. However, a people devastated

**"A war of the rich states against Afghanistan will inevitably lead to the deaths of millions of Afghans who have as little responsibility for the Taliban's or Bin Laden's acts as the workers of the World Trade Center had for the much greater crimes of the US government."**

by 20 years of extreme suffering and starvation have hardly the capacity to mount effective opposition to this band of heavily armed and ruthless soldiers. For there to be any hope of replacing them, there would have to be a massive flow of resources to the impoverished Afghans. If they were supplied with food, education, health and civil infrastructure, they would not tolerate long the burden of Taliban

the US government. The first demands of the US included an order for Pakistan to stop food aid from crossing into Afghanistan - essentially a call for mass murder on a scale that dwarfs the bombings in the US. War against Afghanistan will especially hit those who are already the gravest victims of the 'fundamentalists.' The only people with the facilities to evade the West's weapons of mass destruction, especially starvation, are the Taliban soldiers and it is them and the fundamentalists like Bin Laden who are most likely to gain in strength with every bomb that falls on this shattered country.

The idea of the richest states in the world going to war against the most destitute and helpless is monstrous. If you feel that innocent people shouldn't be slaughtered then you must oppose this barbaric war, or become complicit in another of the



*Aftermath of the second U.S. air strike on a Red Cross facility; October 26, 2001*

misrule. However, this course of action, which would actually damage the men of violence, is not even remotely considered by the US warlords. Instead they propose a storm of death and destruction against the very people who are, in the words of Afghan-American Tamir Ansary, "the first victims of the Taliban".

A war of the rich states against Afghanistan will inevitably lead to the deaths of millions of Afghans who have as little responsibility for the Taliban's or Bin Laden's acts as the workers of the World Trade Center had for the much greater crimes of

great crimes against humanity perpetrated in the name of Western 'civilization' in the few tragic centuries of capitalist global expansion.

*reprinted from the pamphlet  
Against War and Terrorism*

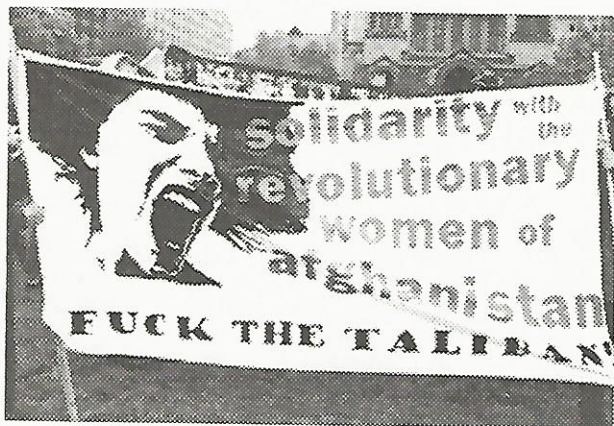
<http://www.struggle.ws/issues/war/pamOCT01.html>



# Supporting the Revolutionary Women of Afghanistan

by Tanya & Flint

This article will try and sketch out why anarchists should critically support the Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan (RAWA) as part of an active anti-war work (as well as part of a larger anti-patriarchal struggle!). RAWA has been on the frontline in radical agitation for women's rights in Afghanistan for over 26 years. They have fought against Soviet occupation in 1979, against the rise of the US-supported fundamentalist reaction which followed, and since 1996, against the similarly misogynist and fundamentalist Taliban. Self-described as "a political/social organization of Afghan women struggling for peace, freedom, democracy and women's rights in fundamentalism-blighted Afghanistan," they are the only grass roots, feminist, secular, and social democratic women's organization on the ground in that country.



Anarchist solidarity with RAWA in Boston

Now with the current US war effort, the world's eyes are upon Afghanistan and all its facets, including RAWA. RAWA are freedom fighters who risk their lives educating and providing aid for women and girls in Afghanistan and in surrounding refugee camps. They are raising revolutionaries while running clandestine schools for girls who are otherwise denied education, running secret income-generating workplaces which are the only means for widowed women's survival under a regime that bans a working female population, or distributing medical care, quilts and food to refugee families in Pakistan. At the rise of the Taliban RAWA had to expand their work into neighboring Pakistan, where millions of Afghan refugees are living in deplorable conditions. There, RAWA sends medical teams to women who

have sometimes never been able to see a doctor. They established the refugee Malalai hospital in Pakistan for 11 years but were forced to close it recently for lack of funds.

While carrying on this work under such circumstances they have at various times taken up arms. In recent encounters with Taliban supporters in Pakistan, they have had to fight them off with sticks. They have armed guards outside their clandestine schools for girls in some regions. They have just issued a call for an uprising either with or without the tacit support of the UN.

With the seemingly imminent fall of the Taliban as US bombs crash down and Northern Alliance forces push ever forward, we cannot mirror the enthusiasm of mainstream media that now women's problems are solved. In a recent speech Laura Bush has equated the US "military gains" with women's liberation in Afghanistan, in which "women are no longer imprisoned in their homes. They can listen to music and teach their daughters without fear of punishment."

The fact is that the US has let loose the scourge of the Northern Alliance onto the Afghan masses who endured their fundamentalist and chaotic rule from 1992 until 1996, before being dethroned by the Taliban. The Jehadi and Mujahideen factions that ruled (and are now part of the Northern Alliance) have a well documented list of human rights violations.

The forces of General Dostum, who is now cheered as the protagonist behind various anti-Taliban victories, are accused of regularly abducting and raping women during that period. RAWA states that many women and their families are fleeing the advance of the N.A. forces, well aware of the terror the population endured pre-Taliban, and indicating that it was in many ways worse than the reign of the Taliban. The only thing that changed for women was that the Taliban institutionalized their misogynist decrees.

Rape in a broad sense is part of the class war waged against the potentially powerful. It is a tactic of domination which intends to strip the humanity, and consequently the ability to act as a free person, from its victims. Women as a class, like the poor and oppressed classes as a whole, hold the potential for revolutionary change in their

organized struggle to topple domination - a threat to those who hold that power. When asked why the Taliban instituted such draconian laws against women, one RAWA member said it was because they "could smell the feminist change in the air globally," and so had to act against it. While it is a growing trend for rape to be carried out as a strategic military weapon in modern warfare, in which terrorizing and humiliating a population becomes the means to the ends of "ethnic cleansing," it has always been effective in regulating the social behavior of women. It is here where we can see one of the links to women's oppression around the world with women's oppression under the Taliban and other fundamentalists.

Supporting RAWA is a beginning, and as anarchists we enthusiastically support their work as tangible weapons against patriarchy and the deadening oppression all Afghanis face under the latest of fundamentalists. If we see their politics as "radical liberalism" then we can be in solidarity with the only group that displays potential for anti-authoritarian libertarian politics in Afghanistan. They already exhibit practices of mutual aid, decentralization, and uncompromising practice of anti-patriarchal struggle. We must make the connections between the concentrated patriarchy inherent in the fundamentalist regimes (of all major religions and cultures) and that of the subtly patriarchal Western capitalist democracies.

In addition, the goal of anarchists supporting RAWA would be to publicly advance their opposition to patriarchy and US military aggression, and fundamentalism in all its forms, among the different social struggles in our areas. We can also try to remedy the polarization of the anti-war movement into either pacifism or authoritarian left "anti-imperialism". We are anti-militaristic and anti-authoritarian; we want feminism and self-determination, social peace and political and economic freedom.

However, since RAWA is an explicitly political group, having declared so once they fought as armed anti-imperialists against the Soviet occupation in the 80s, they have a political program that as anarchists we take great exception to.

## THE STATE

Much of RAWA's literature calls for a sec-



ular democratic State with the full participation of all Afghans and women especially (and happily excluding all fundamentalists vehemently). They are not anarchists. They want a State which would ideally extend human rights to all its citizens and guarantees equal participation and representation - a situation much desirable to their current one.

How do we envision our ideal society being organized in a place that could only reach the level of chaos it has through its systematic destruction by competing super-powers and misogynistic warlords? People will use the example of the current state of Afghanistan as the reason why anarchism would not work... we must be prepared to say why this is absolutely false. Instead we can clearly show that it has been the struggle for nation state power that has reduced Afghanistan to its present state. We should put forth a critique of the State as fundamentally based on domination, hierarchy, and power, and so therefore opposed to fundamental freedoms, and provide an alternative vision federated councils where whole communities participate in public life.

## ECONOMICS

RAWA seemingly has no economic analysis. If RAWA's "secular democracy" means another capitalist economy dependent on the whims of IMF and World Bank agendas, or if they have in mind a socialist democracy, it is so far unclear. Much of their political agenda is shrouded in the diplomacy that post-September 11th has pressured them to take. It is clear to us that Afghanistan will never be free from any form of imperialism if it adopts a capitalist economy.

Regarding class, and cross-class alliances that we would be opposed to, it's still a question what a discussion on class means in their context (where 80% are unemployed, and those that are employed are very marginally so). What does class mean where the majority of the population is forced into the domestic reproduction of labor tasks only, prohibited access to whatever medical care is available and forced into begging and prostitution (which is also illegal) as their sole method of survival? What does class mean when people sell their fucking children? If there is a class war going on in Afghanistan, it's the women who are fighting back as the oppressed.

## THE ROLE OF THE UNITED NATIONS

As a solution to the ongoing chaos in Afghanistan, RAWA proposes a UN peace-keeping force which would have the aim of disarming the warring parties. They also have

called on the UN to revoke the economic sanctions on their country, which had been merely punishing the poor and awarding more moral power to the Taliban, whose international and criminal connections left them unscathed by the sanctions. Instead, they say, the UN should place diplomatic sanctions on the countries who have been funding the various fundamentalist factions, including France, Saudi Arabia, Iran, and the United States!

On the other hand, we as anarchists need to strengthen both our critique of the UN and our proposed solutions to the kind of chaos the majority of the world's population lives under. The left has been caught with its pants down, offering no solutions other than reliance on hierarchical global governmental bodies to fix the nastiest of our problems in the world. We are seemingly caught in a "double blackmail": if we oppose US bombing of Afghanistan, we are for the legitimacy of the Taliban; if we oppose the Taliban, we are for US bombs and/or UN "peace keeping" intervention, which paves the way for global capital to rebuild the country.

## THE EX-KING

Of other unlikely scenarios RAWA proposes is one in which the 89-year old ex-King Zahir Shah should return to preside over a "transitional" period which would usher in secular representative democracy.

Like other leftwing groups in Afghanistan, RAWA believes that the king is the only symbol of stability that their country has ever known, and though his reign was not ideal, most of the population believes it was certainly better than present times. This nostalgic notion is further complicated by the fact that the Zahir Shah has met with a recently assembled Loya Jirga which was overwhelmingly fundamentalist in tone and had absolutely no pretenses to include feminist or women's voices in general.

RAWA is not monarchist, but they err in using the symbology of the king to unify a secular and anti-fundamentalist political front in that it is nationalistic and hierarchical at its root. The ability of the population to grasp real "democracy," in the sense of self-rule, through active participation becomes even further from reach. As anarchists we see the latter as the goal in social organization; giving up self-determination, and therefore freedom, through the political system of representation furthers us from the solution to the problem, for domination and hierarchy will always be at the root in an anarchist critique.

That under the king things were better is true in a relative sense, yet this should not forego the fact that there are liberating ways to move forward. The well being of the

women of Afghanistan depends on it.

## PRACTICAL ACTION

Critical support is not intended to mirror the inactivity of sectarian academics. As organized anarchists, we can publicly advance RAWA's opposition to patriarchy and military aggressions by the US, not to mention the US support of the Northern Alliance, within the growing anti-war movement in North America. We have a void to fill when absolute pacifism on one side and authoritarian left "anti-imperialism" on the other leaves no room for anti-militarism and anti-authoritarian organizing. It also gives us a forum for illustrating how anarchism is a desirable political philosophy and one that is different from "radical liberalism."

With this understanding of critical support, the federation of collectives and individuals that is NEFAC are currently organizing RAWA benefit events, will be distributing RAWA literature, and will undertake educational events. What other kind of solidarity could anarchists provide? Demonstrations to stop the US bombing, end UN sanctions, demanding women's rights/ human rights in Afghanistan. Working with local women's groups in the US to connect the global issues of women's rights, capitalist globalization, and nation-states and their wars.

We can do this without compromising our principles. Further, this kind of activism gives us a chance to not only put a portion of them in action but to describe how they are different. Not doing so, we risk being irrelevant.

RAWA is not an anarchist organization. However they have by necessity had to adopt a great number of anti-authoritarian tactics and ideas, such as mutual aid, decentralization and autonomy. Further they are opposed to all of the most likely governments in Afghanistan: a State-Capitalist government (ala Soviet Union; for instance with foreign backing from the Uzbekistan Communist Party), a Taliban government, a Jehadi government, or a government backed by Iran or Pakistan.

They are prepared to renounce the UN and the King; all the while they have pleaded with both to do something different and condemned them often for their actions. They have backed themselves into a political situation where they are unlikely to ever be accepted into the government. That is why they don't have any friends among other political organizations in Afghanistan. Further, they have called for an uprising... a social revolution... with or without (and I think they realize at this point that it means without) support of any of anyone else but the people. If there is hope for anarchism in Afghanistan... it is there.



# Why Do They Hate Us?

by Wayne Price

A small group of militants hated the U.S.A. so much that they spent years planning their attacks on New York City and Washington D.C. They did not care that they would murder thousands of people, mostly working people. They were so perversely dedicated that they were willing to die themselves in the attacks.

Around the world a great many people were pleased by the assault, to the point of celebrating. Many, many more did not support the explosion of the Twin Towers, and even condemned it, but still expressed understanding for the motives of the terrorists. There were few or no political or religious leaders in mostly-Muslim countries or elsewhere who endorsed the attacks. Even the assailants kept quiet; no one took "credit" (if that is the right word). Osama bin Laden denies responsibility and the Taliban regime claims that he is innocent. Yet many people also showed some satisfaction at the attack, a sort of pleasure in seeing the school yard bully get his nose bloodied.

Why do "they" hate "us"? ask many bewildered US workers. The US population is generally ignorant, mis-educated, and deliberately lied-to, about international affairs even more than domestic politics. They see the US as a peaceful and friendly country, which helps other nations out of good-will, and otherwise wants to be left alone. Suddenly, as they see it, out of the blue, the US was attacked. US working people identify with the national state; since they are kindly and decent people, they assume that their national government is also kindly and decent. Like the terrorist attackers, US workers mentally make a nationalist bloc between the US state (and ruling class) and the US working population. They think of themselves as "America" and say, "we" and "us" when speaking about the national state of which they really know little and have less control.

The "explanation" offered by the US government and media is that "they" hate our "freedom," our "democracy," and "our way of life." This supposed explanation is given most strongly by US figures on the right, who agree with the worst Islamists in opposing separation of church and state, equality for women, and rights for Gays and Lesbians. However, the charge that "they," in their poverty, resent US wealth, is closer to the truth. (Of course, to understand why so

many hate the US is not to justify the few who committed mass murder at the World Trade Center and Pentagon.)

That the USA. is the most powerful state on earth today is well known, but few think through what this implies. For one thing, it means murderous military intervention in the affairs of other countries. The criminal Vietnam War killed millions of Vietnamese and fifty thousand US soldiers. The Vietnamese people have never really recovered. Then, in the last twenty years, the US has bombed or invaded Haiti, Panama, Grenada, Yugoslavia, Sudan, Somalia, Libya, Iraq, Iran, and, of course, Afghanistan. These military interventions were mostly done against the will of the existing governments, and often in an effort to overthrow the existing governments. There have also been military interventions by proxy, in which the US gave large scale support to "rebel" groups against established governments. The most well-known (and "successful") were the U.S.-supported contra war against the Sandinistas in Nicaragua and, again, the US support of extreme Islamists in Afghanistan .... including Osama bin Laden and the predecessors of the Taliban. Now the US state complains when the monster it created in Afghanistan turns on it.

The US state's military missions, military alliances, and "peacetime" military bases cover the globe. Its European military alliance, NATO, has actually expanded despite the collapse of the Soviet Union. Three decades after the end of the Korean War, a large number of US troops remain in South Korea. US troops remain in Panama, even after the canal was "given back" to Panama. They were useful in seizing Noreiga, the Panamanian president, for trial in the US. Bizarrely, a US base remains in Guantanamo, Cuba, all through the reign of Castro. The US was a major supporter of the Pakistani military through the Cold War, including the Afghanistan struggle. The US continued to be friendly to Pakistan, even as that state built up the Taliban. Each of these instances could be argued about, but altogether, they make a pattern of a superpower which throws its military weight around.

The US government remains the most heavily armed nuclear power, with nuclear missiles capable of exterminating human life on earth many times over. Following the col-

lapse of the Soviet Union, many liberals called for seizing the opportunity to create world-wide nuclear disarmament. Instead, the US plans to break all existing arms control agreements by setting up an unworkable "missile defense shield," which will only create a new arms race.

Behind this mountain of military might is an economic drive, a need to dominate the world economy and draw wealth from all the world. That the US is so much richer than the "Third World" countries is widely admitted. Not admitted is that the US is rich because these other nations are poor. Their ruling classes may share in the riches of the US/European/Japanese ruling classes, but the poverty of their masses is the wealth of that world ruling class. The US is the main beneficiary of modern imperialism. Unlike the old colonialism, there are few countries which the US state owns outright, except for Puerto Rico and several islands and peoples in the Pacific, peoples who have as much right to self-determination as any large nation.

Otherwise, US capitalism's domination of the world is neo-colonial: the oppressed nations have "independent" national states, with their own governments, flags, and postage stamps, but their economies are still completely dependent on the world market. They cannot develop their industries, plan their economies, or decide on a balance of production and consumption, by themselves. Which national economy dominates the world market? Only one, that of the US capitalists. The US economy serves as a giant magnet, pulling all other economies toward it (and its junior partners and sometime competitors, the Western European and Japanese national capitalism's). Loans to build up national economies? Go to US banks or to world financial institutions (World Bank or International Monetary Fund) dominated by the US. Want to build modern industry? Get investments from US capitalists. Need modern chemicals or machinery or medicines? The international patents are owned by US companies. As a result, the poor, exploited, nations are deeply in debt to the richer, imperialist nations, especially the US. The nations of Africa have had to fight hard to get the slightest break from US firms to produce cheaper medicines for AIDS.

The Soviet Union controlled its empire in Eastern Europe by military force, as the



British used to control their world-wide empire. But US capitalist imperialism only uses force as a last resort. First, it holds the world together through its economic might. In the poverty-riddled lands of the Arab East and in other oppressed nations, there is enormous resentment of the domination of US wealth over their economies. Often this comes out as hostility to US cultural products, such as movies or music or foods. Whatever the faults or virtues of US movies or fastfood, what is really being expressed is a fury at imperialism, not necessarily a dislike of international culture.

In over 50 years since the end of World War II, world capitalism has simply been unable to industrialize the poor nations of the South. Most of Africa remains destitute. A few world regions have developed some industry, especially in Southeastern Asia. But even these, the most successful, remain developed in a most uneven and unstable fashion, as becomes clear in any economic crisis. The people of Eastern Europe and Russia thought that overthrowing Soviet state-capitalism would make them like Western Europe. Instead, they are like Latin America. The industrialized nations of before World War I were the US, Western Europe, Russia (barely), and Japan. Today, these are still the industrialized nations - with Russia still barely among them. World capitalism has maintained the international imbalance of economic development.

In the Arab and Muslim regions, this inequality is easy to see. There are many nations filled with desperately poor people. The vast wealth of petroleum oil has helped a layer of people in a few nations - but even these nations have been unable to develop even relatively independent economies. The US industrial economy is built on cheap, widely-available oil. Transportation depends on gasoline. Food depends on oil-based fertilizer and pesticides. Clothing, housing, and other things widely use oil-based plastics. Considering that this is a nonrenewable resource, as well as terribly polluting and a cause of the

greenhouse effect, this oil-using habit will someday have to be cut way back. But meanwhile, Westerners' high standard of living requires this cheap, available oil, while the people of the Arab East, the source of most of the oil, remain marginalized, unindustrialized, and poor.

Inside these poor countries, the political results are what would be expected, namely a lack of democracy and freedom. The US state prides itself on its democracy, but this has only been possible because of its great wealth, built in part on the poverty of other peoples. Due to its wealth, US corporate rich have been able to give up some crumbs to the working classes, when the working class forces them to. To prevent revolutionary struggles, the US ruling class has been willing, under pressure, to provide some of its bounty to buy off layers of the middle class and working class. This creates popular contentment and a willingness to channel grievances through the political process. But the rulers of the poor nations of the South do not the wealth to buy off their working populations. To

helped the Shah of Iran, and now works with the dictator of Syria. All over the world, the US state has supported dictators. When US leaders declare that the "terrorists" oppose us because of our values of "democracy" and "freedom," it is a sick joke.

US rulers pick and chose which dictatorships to be horrified at and which to make allies. They pick and chose which atrocities to condemn and which to ignore. For example, they publicized the horror of Yugoslavian "ethnic cleaning" of the Albanian Kosovars in order to justify their bombing campaign against the Milosevic regime. Meanwhile, they have ignored the decades of almost genocidal war waged by the US ally Turkey against its Kurdish citizens. Turkish Kurds have been denied the right to speak their language, to associate in political parties, or to determine their national fate. This has been backed up by military campaigns of great brutality, including the torture of Kurdish leaders and the extermination of whole villages. The US public is not aroused about this because the US govern-

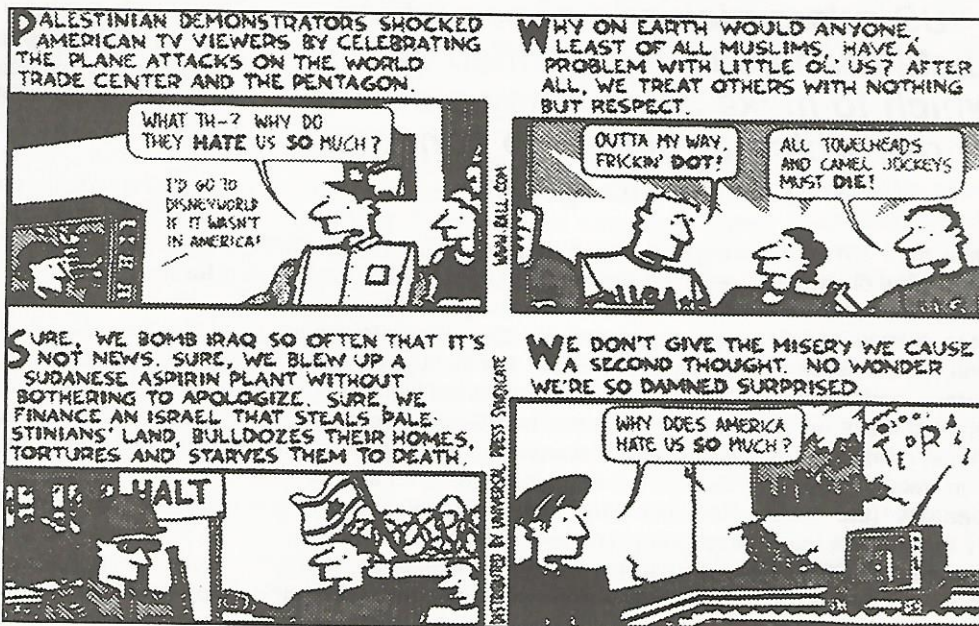
ment and media have not emphasized it. The Turkish military has been a useful ally against Iraq, Yugoslavia, and now Afghanistan.

Similarly, the Bush administration has welcomed the support of the present Russian government against the Afghan rulers.

Meanwhile the Russian state has been running a years-long assault on the people of Chechnya, which is still within the Russian borders. To deny the Chechens' independence, the Russians have been waging a most vicious war against them,

destroying much of their nation. But Chechnya, a nation with many Muslims, is near Afghanistan and the Afghan people know all about it.

But what most angers people in the mostly-Muslim nations has been two things: US support for Israel and the continued US war against Iraq. Israel is the result of the Zionist movement, an effort to plant European people in the "Third World" land of Palestine. Zionism's aim was to create a Jewish State, a



keep them down, they must be repressed. At best they go through cycles of government, from corrupt, authoritarian, "democracies," to overt dictatorships (kings, generals, ayatollahs, mullahs, leaders of socialist parties, or little brothers of the poor) and then back again. They may go from a fake "democracy" to a revolutionary or Islamic dictatorship, and go back again, never really winning self-management for working people.

The exploited people of the Arab East know full well that the US state props up the kings of Saudi Arabia and Jordan as it once

*continued on page 21*



state of "the Jewish people" everywhere in the world, as opposed to the people of whatever religion who actually lived there. It intended to occupy all the land supposedly held by the ancient Hebrews 2000 years ago. Its justification was the Jewish bible - and a promise by the British empire (the "Balfour Declaration"). The main people who were actually living there were not to be consulted of course and could not be, because these goals required dispossessing those Palestinian Arabs. A Jewish population, fleeing from the after-effects of Hitler's genocide, was channeled into Palestine to replace the original population (who had had nothing to do with European atrocities). Through a series of wars, massacres, and supposedly legal actions, the Palestinian peasants and workers were mostly dispossessed. Their lands, their farms, their orchards, their villages, and their cities were taken away. They are not allowed to return nor granted compensation. A small number still live in Israel as second class citizens, Muslims and Christians in a (by definition) "Jewish state." Half of the others live in the West Bank (of the Jordan River) or on the Gaza Strip, under Israeli occupation. The other half is scattered among the Arab nations and elsewhere.

For some time now, most Palestinians and their organizations have accepted the reality of Israel. They know it will not go away and cannot be militarily defeated. Therefore they have only asked for self-determination on what is left of Palestine, on the West Bank and Jordan. The Israeli state has controlled these areas for 35 years now, the longest military occupation of another land in recent history. While pretending to negotiate (the Oslo "peace process"), actually the Zionists have expanded the number of their settlements in the these Occupied Territories, as well as the size of the settlements. This has been spear-headed by reactionary Jewish fanatics, the mirror image of the Islamic fanatics. But it has had the support of the various Israeli governments, both liberal and conservative. The state has linked the settlements by a network of roads and military garrisons. The Palestinian areas have been carved into unviable islands. Meanwhile, the Israeli state has insisted on the right to own virtually all of Jerusalem, while the Palestinians have only asked for half. Not surprisingly, the so-called peace process died of its own hypocrisy.

Throughout this awful history, the US

state has been the major ally of Israel. The Palestinians fight with stones or small arms. Israel fights with US-made helicopters and weapons, as well as its own (it is an open secret that Israel has nuclear bombs). All US politicians assert their undying support for Israel. Billions of dollars have been given to Israel by the US state. This is partly due to the domestic strength of the pro-Israel lobby, but Israel is useful to US imperialism in controlling the Arab states. In war after war, Israel has beaten the Arab armies. In fury and frustration, many Arab workers and peasants have turned from the secular movements which are willing to recognize Israel. Some look toward fanatical religious parties who are willing, in their military weakness, to use terrorist attacks on Israeli workers. As long as the Israeli government, with US support, does not adapt to living with Palestinians (by withdrawing both troops and settlements from the Occupied Territories, for example), it will continue to enrage Arabs and Muslims against both itself and the US.

The other issue which has particularly

## ***"US rulers pick and chose which dictatorships to be horrified at and which to make allies. They pick and chose which atrocities to condemn and which to ignore"***

angered many Arabs and others has revolved around the US war with Iraq. Like many other dictators, Iraq's Saddam Hussein was supported by the US state when it seemed convenient. For eight years, the Iraqi regime was in a pointless but bloody war with its neighbor Iran. The US rulers were pleased that Iraq was weakening the Iranian regime. The US provided intelligence to the state of Iraq, permitted Hussein to buy hard-to-get weaponry, and helped him in other ways.

But, as bin Laden was later to do, Hussein turned on the US. He decided to invade Kuwait, a small but oil-rich country. It had one of those monarchical-feudal regimes, which oppressed the large number of Palestinians and non-Arabs who worked there. Due to the oil, and to the challenge to its authority, the US state made an issue about this particular atrocity.

Suddenly Saddam Hussein was declared a very bad man and a vast military force was assembled to defeat Iraq. And it was defeated, partly because the Iraqi soldiers (workers and peasants) would not fight for their government.

In response to this defeat, Iraqis rose up to overthrow the government, especially

Shiite Muslims in the South and Kurds in the north of Iraq. But the US state did not want a revolution. It might destabilize the region, upsetting all those friendly dictatorships. Freedom for Iraqi Kurds might stir up the Kurds under the control of the Turkish allies. The US rulers hoped to replace Hussein with another military ruler, different from him only in being more cooperative with the US. So the US army stopped short of destroying the Iraqi military. It left Hussein enough to reestablish his role. Instead the US military continued to watch over and "protect" the Kurds and southern Muslims by flying US planes over a large part of Iraqi airspace. Many people do not realize it, but ten years after the Iraqi war, the US is still flying planes over Iraq and still bombing it.

The other method the US used, to pressure Hussein, was an embargo. The Iraqi rulers can only sell a controlled amount of its oil, and buy only a limited amount of food and medicine and other goods. This is supposed to either make Hussein behave or to inspire the military to replace him. As an effective dictator, Hussein has kept his officers under control. Meanwhile, he really does not care that his people starve or lack medicine, so this does not pressure him. At least a half million children have died from this embargo policy. That is many more people than died in the recent attacks on the US. The US rulers are continuing to wage a war on the Iraqi peasants and workers. This is widely known in Europe and in the mostly-Muslim nations, but the US working class has been kept in the dark.

So, there are good reasons for many people to hate the US, in the Muslim nations and elsewhere. Even those who are favorable to the US are usually ambivalent, liking something and hating others. Perhaps some of the hatred is irrational, due to way US imperialism has broken up traditional societies but replaced them only with poverty, chaos, and dictatorship. The program of many oppressed people has sometimes gone into the dead ends of terrorism and religious dictatorship. But they have legitimate grievances. Their working people have suffered far more than working class people in the US have any idea. "Americans" should not be surprised if the evil their ruling class has done abroad should be returned to them.

*reprinted from the pamphlet  
Against War and Terrorism*

<http://www.struggle.ws/issues/war/pamOCT01.html>



# No Palestinian Ever Called Me A Nigger

by Lorenzo Komboa Ervin

Chris Gatewood is the outspoken leader of the Durham, North Carolina branch of the National Association Advancement of Colored Peoples (NAACP). He recently made "controversial", though truthful and courageous remarks denouncing the United States government for planning military retaliation for the Pentagon and World Trade Center attacks, and the use of Black males as cannon fodder and mercenaries in any front line attack.

At a September 15th monthly local NAACP meeting, he said that African Americans should not have to fight in any military action, and that a violent U.S. counterattack would be wrong. "Black males can no longer be used as sacrificial lambs at the time of war," he said in his three-page statement.

"Those black males who make it back home alive from war are likely to come home and be discriminated against by the [very] people whose businesses were headquartered in the World Trade Center, racially abused/profiled by an American police officer, killed on the streets in their crime-infested neighborhoods", or harmed by Bush administration policies, he said.

He also said that the U.S. government has oppressed Africans, Middle Easterners, and other people of color worldwide. Because Bush was selected president by a "right-wing Supreme Court", he said, the attacks were "not" "an attack on freedom".

Media reports of the remarks sparked threatening phone calls to the NAACP offices, according to an NAACP officer, Anita Keith-Foust. It also caused NAACP national President, Kweisi Mfume, to denounce the remarks and to apparently silence him from making other such comments in the future, similar to the fashion former Nation of Islam spokesperson Malcolm X was silenced by NOI leader Elijah Muhammad in 1963, when he spoke out about the assassination of President John Kennedy, calling it a case of "chickens coming home to roost"...

What should we make of all this? These comments by Gatewood certainly echoed my own, and I am sure those of many other Black people. We are supposed to, as Malcolm X put it over 35 years ago... bark when the white man says bark, and bite

when the white man says bite!" He was referring to our being used as troops all over the world. Now we are supposed to fight and die for a racist corrupt government, when it is the USA which has clearly brought on this attack. We are supposed to fight for a country where we still have limited social, economic and political rights, and where we are still subject to death by any racist cop or citizen, where there is widespread poverty, mass imprisonment of the youth, and massive unemployment concentrated in the Black community. The obvious question is what the hell are we fighting for? To avenge America? To mourn America? Why, we don't owe this country anything, and what we do owe them, they don't want! They have killed and enslaved generations of our people, down to the present day. They have yet to pay reparations for those crimes they have committed against our people; they refuse to even discuss the matter at the recent World Conference Against Racism in Durban, South Africa.

Our fight is in, and with, America for full human rights and liberation, not in Kabul, Khandahar, Islamabad, or hundreds of places we know nothing about and have no beef with their people. It is this country which is "our" enemy, and which is depriving us of our human rights. This hypocritical country, which is bleeding us dry and subjecting us to continued oppression and servitude in numerous forms. We ain't got this situation straight yet, and now we are supposed to go galavanting across the globe to fight for this white racist government. Colin Powell may be a dog for Bush, but it don't mean the rest of us have to be!

Chris Gatewood just said something that all of us should be saying. We need an "independent political stance" away from military intervention, and to say "no you cannot just use Black kids for the next Vietnam." However, shamefully, most of the Left, Liberal, and Black organizations (even so-called "radical", or "nationalist" groups) did not follow the lead of this courageous man, instead they mourned with America.

Well, our time of mourning has to be tempered with the cold understanding that we have to look out for "our interest", not the Pentagon's or Wall Street's. We regret the

thousands of deaths of people who died in the process at the WTC, but we know it is Washington's fault this happened. We also know that if this happened in the Middle East by Israel or the US Army, hardly anybody in this country would say anything.

Clearly this country is not the "peace-loving, innocent country". This is the biggest gun runner in the world, and the biggest instigator of wars. This is a government of thieves and enslavers, and they have dominated the peoples of color of the world with military and economic force ever since its creation. We cannot jump like dogs to defend these people.

It is not the people in the Middle East or Africa who call us nigger, and keep us oppressed, it is the white government in America. If anyone on the face of the earth attacks the slavemaster's plantation, I ain't going to be standing out front growling to stop them from setting his house on fire. That's his problem, and you reap what you sow. The real terrorists are in the Pentagon, the executive boardrooms on Wall Street, and in the White House, where they have always been. Hell, the United States secret intelligence services created the Taliban and Osama Bin Laden, if that is what he is. Do we now want to die and kill others over this cynical reality? Don't be fooled by right-wing partiotism, which is nothing but American fascism.

So we should support Chris Gatewood, hold him up as an outspoken hero. We need to ask why all of the other Black and progressive organizations have not been as forceful in their comments, and we need to ask why they are not building an anti-war response to this military retaliation planned by Bush.

We need to all start to speak the truth to our people, and not curry favor for jobs or social approval. We need to do things that are considered unpopular in a hysterical climate, but have to be said and done nevertheless. George W. Bush is not our friend, Colin Powell is not our brother. They want to kill us off, either in war, in prison, or with a policeman's gun. We face genocide from this government, always have. Now we need to get organized to build a movement which can put forth a progressive agenda on how to use military spending, so that money that they want to squander on war can be used for schools, hospitals, and to rebuild the inner cities of this countries which look like bombed out cities already.

Whatever organization you belong to, start to push them to come out against the war and to actively campaign against war in the Middle East or anywhere else. We have got to get our kids to say "hell no, we won't go!" and "no Viet Cong called me a Nigger" just like they did during the Vietnam war of



# Behind the USA PATRIOT Act

by Ann Harrison (Independent Media Institute)

Since launching their no-holds-barred investigation into the Sept. 11 attacks, the FBI has released an astonishing amount of information about the men who they have identified as the hijackers. There are photographs of them passing through airport security and peering into ATM machines. The FBI has records of their cell phone calls, their cash transfers, air travel, credit card purchases, car rentals, email messages and hotel bills.

Now that the hunt is on for accomplices who could be planning more attacks, law enforcement officials have sought the legal authority to collect even more information about the minutiae of their daily life. The new anti-terrorism law signed into law on Oct. 26 grants law enforcement authorities sweeping new surveillance powers that are not limited to terrorism investigations but also apply to criminal and intelligence investigations.

The new law, known as the USA PATRIOT Act, reaches into every space that Americans once imagined was private. For

instance, police can now obtain court orders to conduct so called "sneak and peak" searches of homes and offices. This allows them to break in, examine and remove or alter items without immediately, if ever, presenting owners with a warrant detailing what they were entitled to do and where.

This seismic shift in the government's power of search and seizure also extends to the examination of records. Authorities can browse medical, financial, educational or even library records without showing evidence of a crime. The law overrides existing state and federal privacy laws

if the FBI claims that the information is connected to an intelligence investigation.

In addition, credit reporting firms like Equifax must disclose to the FBI any information that agents request in connection with a terrorist investigation, without the need for a court order. In the past, this was only permitted in espionage cases. Biometric technology, such as fingerprint readers or iris scanners, will become part of an "integrated entry and exit data system" to identify visa holders entering the United States. Face recognition technology is now being installed in several U.S. airports.

The legislators who rushed these provisions through the House and Senate say that law enforcement authorities need this data to help track down terrorists and prevent future attacks. "We were able to find what I think is the appropriate balance between protecting civil liberties, privacy and ensuring that law enforcement has the tools to do what it must," said Senate Majority Leader Thomas Daschle (D-S.D.)

in a statement following the passage of the bill.

But civil liberty groups have been alarmed by this legislation since it started whisking its way through Congress. Jim Dempsey, deputy director of the Washington D.C.-based Center for Democracy and Technology (CDT), says he

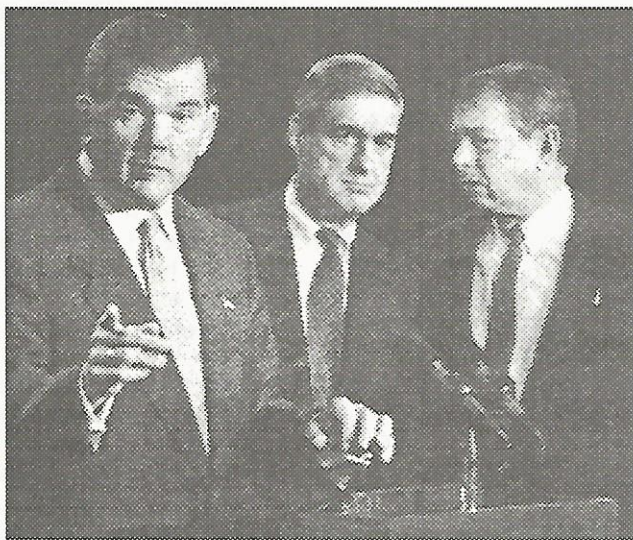
their close relationship with the FBI to essentially fill in subpoenas provided by prosecutors. "To do this with no prior judicial approval is a fundamental change in the way we have set up our police agencies and set them apart from our foreign intelligence agencies," said Dempsey. "And it was done with very little debate." Legislators who voted for the USA PATRIOT Act pointed out that the most controversial surveillance sections will expire in 2005. Senate Judiciary Committee chairman Sen. Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.) announced that a four-year expiration date "will be crucial in making sure that these new law enforcement powers are not abused."

Dempsey says the CDT is hoping there will be a Congressional review prior to any extension of the provisions. But he, and many others, have pointed out that these so-called "sunset provisions" do not apply to the sharing of grand jury information, giving the CIA the permanent benefits of grand jury powers.

The so-called "sneak and peak searches" are permanent as well. And further, the sunset provisions do not apply to ongoing cases. This means that intelligence investigations, which often run for years, would continue to operate under the law even if provisions are not extended past 2005. Also exempted are any future investigations of crimes that took place before this date.

Internet surveillance via "pen register" devices, which capture phone numbers dialed on outgoing telephone calls, and "trap and trace" devices, which capture the numbers of incoming calls, are also exempt from the sunset provisions. These orders were originally used to provide investigators with telephone numbers dialed by suspects. They can now be used to monitor email addressing information and Web pages visited, in some circumstances without judicial oversight. Investigations approved by the secretive FISA intelligence court would also not require notification.

Lee Tien, senior staff attorney for the San Francisco-based Electronic Frontier Foundation, notes that this type of surveillance requires mere certification with no evidence that the person being monitored is involved in criminal conduct or is a suspected member of a terrorist organization. While



The scum rises from left to right: Tom Ridge, Director of Homeland Security, Robert Mueller, FBI Director, John Ashcroft, Attorney General

is particularly concerned about the provision in the law that allows the FBI to share with the CIA information collected in grand jury investigations. The 1947 National Security Act states that the CIA should have no domestic police or subpoena powers. But Dempsey says CIA agents could now use



this online surveillance requires a judge's approval, the law mandates that the judge must approve every request and is not required to evaluate how the order was carried out.

Tien said he will be working with other online civil liberties groups to get the government to notify targets of pen/trap surveillances and increase judicial oversight. "The potential for pen/trap surveillance on the Internet is enormous," says Tien.

The new law also permits any U.S. attorney or state attorney general to order the installation of the FBI's Carnivore Internet surveillance system, which also has the capacity to capture the contents of email messages. The agency says the public must trust that investigators will not review this information.

Unlike trap and trace orders, Carnivore requires that investigators set up an audit trail which includes what information was gathered, by whom and when. But Tien notes the court is not required to review the information and make sure that it complies with the terms of the certification. "No one has that oversight role," says Tien.

While the government has the power to snoop, citizens who engage in similar activities now fall under the government's new definition of terrorists. The current definition of terrorism has been expanded to include hacking into a U.S. government computer system or breaking into and damaging any Internet-connected computer. Prison terms of between five to 20 years can now be used to prosecute the new crime of "cyberterrorism," which covers hacking attempts causing \$5,000 in aggregate value in one year, damage to medical equipment or injury to any person.

Even Internet Service Providers, universities and network administrators are authorized under the new law to conduct surveillance of "computer trespassers" without a court order. The new law compels any Internet provider or telephone company to turn over customer information, including phone numbers called, without a court order, if the FBI claims that the records are relevant to a terrorism investigation. The company is forbidden to disclose that the FBI is conducting an investigation, has immunity to provide any sensitive data and is not bound by statu-

tory rights to suppress the information. "There is no incentive for anyone to know about it, or challenge it or rein it in," says Dempsey.

Prior to the passage of the USA PATRIOT Act, Laura Murphy, Director of the ACLU Washington National Office, wrote letters to

General John Ashcroft has brushed off these concerns and issued a directive to law enforcement investigators, urging them to aggressively use the new powers, which he says will be used to launch a "law enforcement campaign."

Steve Shapiro, national legal director for the ACLU, says Congress should use its unique subpoena power to get information about investigations and exercise its oversight authority on investigators. "Congress has given them these powers," said Shapiro. "And it has a big responsibility to make sure these powers are not abused." Tien said the EFF would also be actively opposing calls for national ID cards, for biometric



*National Guard troops searching people in New York City*

the House and Senate warning that the bill would give enormous power to the executive branch unchecked by meaningful judicial review. "Included in the bill are provisions that would allow for the mistreatment of immigrants, the suppression of dissent and the investigation and surveillance of wholly innocent Americans," said Murphy.

Civil liberties groups point out that the government has a history of launching investigations against political dissidents. These include the FBI investigations of Martin Luther King and other civil rights leaders in the 1960s, illegal spying on anti-war protesters in the 1960s and 1970s and surveillance on the sanctuary movement that provided asylum for those fleeing Central American death squads during the 1980s. Attorney

systems and for mandatory record keeping by ISPs, which has already been discussed seriously in Europe.

Dempsey says the CDT is concerned about the possibility that because the FBI has not been able to get to the core of the suspected terrorist cells, they will cast an even wider net. Cut loose from past standards and judicial controls, investigators, he fears, will collect more information on innocent people and be distracted from the task of actually identifying those who may be planning future attacks.

"That is where the law allows them to take it," says Dempsey. "And that is bad for civil liberties and bad for anti-terrorism investigations."

## ... and in Canada, Bill C-36

With their own smug efforts to "combat terrorism" the Canadian government has fast tracked their own anti-terrorism legislation - Bill C-36. Canadian government officials said the 150-page omnibus bill will expand police wiretapping powers, impose severe penalties on groups that fall within the new definition of "terrorism" and ban fundraising for "terrorist" purposes.

Some of the more insidious aspects of Bill C-36 include granting the police the power to arrest anyone they choose without justification or recourse for the detainee; the expansion of wiretapping, email monitoring, and surveillance; expanded powers of search and seizure, investigation, and arrest; the requirement that lawyers disclose confidential information about clients to the Canadian authorities upon request; and strengthened laws excluding "undesirable" immigrants and refugees from entering the country.



# We Don't Want Your Bloody Wars!

*by the Northeastern Federation of Anarcho-Communists (NEFAC)*

## **AGAINST TERRORISM, AGAINST THE STATE!**

As a result of the terrorist attacks that took place on Tuesday, September 11, over 6,000 people are still missing or confirmed dead. As anarchists, we stand with the rest of the world in expressing our sorrow and disbelief over the devastation which took place in New York City, Washington DC, and rural Pennsylvania. It goes without saying that we are against the deliberate and indiscriminate use of violence as a means to achieve political ends, and firmly believe that terrorist activity runs contrary to our own vision of radical social change. Although the targets of these recent attacks may be viewed as symbolic centers of global capitalism (World Trade Center), and U.S. militarism (Pentagon), a majority of the victims of these atrocities were ordinary, working class people, and this is indefensible. Our hearts go out to the families and friends of the missing and dead.

## **TERRORISM: RELIGION, CAPITAL, AND STATE**

Although the United States has promised a drawn out 'war against terrorism', we will not allow ourselves to be manipulated into supporting this war effort. As anarchists, we stand against terrorism in all its forms, and make no distinction between terror used by religious extremists, capitalist exploiters, or that of the State. The terrorism of religious extremists is a very real threat in the world today, and can be seen in the form of abortion clinic bombings by far-right Christian fundamentalists, the massacre of Palestinians by ultra-orthodox Jewish settlers, and now the recent attacks on the east coast of the United States (which has been, rightly or wrongly, blamed on Islamic extremists). These are, of course, inexcusable acts of terrorism used by religious zealots to cause bloodshed and instill fear amongst the public. However, these acts of terrorism are often eclipsed by even more violent and destructive forms of terrorism embodied in capitalism and the State. The capitalist philosophy of 'profit over people' has a long and bloody history, which has resulted in obscene wealth for the few and widespread death and suffering for the majority of the world's population. From the early roots of slavery and colonization, to the more recent phase of globalization, capitalism has always

used the terrorist actions of the State to violently enforce its rule.

As the most powerful capitalist State, the United States has been a prime motivating force behind many devastating terrorist campaigns. From the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, to the more recent bombing of the Al Shifa Pharmaceutical company in Sudan; from the installation of dictatorships in Latin America, to the financial and military aid of murderous regimes in Israel, Turkey, Colombia, and elsewhere; from the deliberate cluster-bombing of a crowded Yugoslav marketplace to ongoing economic sanctions against Iraq which have culminated in over 500,000 children dead; and now, in a new 'war against terrorism' abroad, we can expect to see a new chapter in the terrorist legacy of the United States. These events are not historical exceptions, rather they are a necessary component of maintaining the economic and political dominance of a powerful capitalist State.

## **NATIONALISM AND RACISM: ENEMIES OF THE WORKING CLASS**

As popular support for the belligerent reaction of the US government grows in the wake of the recent terrorist attacks, we can once again see racist attacks in the streets as nationalism rear its ugly head. Nationalism has traditionally been the process in which the ruling class uses racism, patriotism and religion as a means to get the working class to identify with the State and its values. The fear and powerlessness felt in the aftermath of the recent attacks has been channeled into blind patriotism and racist attacks, which serves the interests of the ruling class. The increasing violence against Arabs, Moslems, peoples of Middle Eastern decent (and people perceived to be members of those ethnic and religious groups) will be exploited in an effort to reinforce the war effort abroad, and keep the working class divided at home.

We anarchists extend our full solidarity to those currently under racist attack as a result of the nationalist backlash, and will actively take part in any defense of these communities if necessary (while respecting their autonomy and self-determination). We promote, as always, anti-racism and internationalist working class solidarity as our strongest weapon against the global ruling classes and their wars.

## **NO WAR BETWEEN NATIONS, NO PEACE BETWEEN CLASSES**

We do not see this current war effort as a war against terrorism, but rather, a war against humanity. The U.S. government is prepared to invade numerous countries and cause untold atrocities and destruction in a multi-front war against an invisible and unknown enemy. Like all wars fought by the State, this is a war of power. The United States is not prepared to combat the real root causes of terrorism, which would require fundamental change in its own foreign policy. Rather it wants to consolidate its position as the dominant world power.

The tragic human toll of the recent terrorist attacks will be used as a justification to slash education, housing, health care and social programs in order to finance an already gluttonous military budget. A heightened state of repression will exist for everyone as civil liberties are lost in exchange for a false sense of security and justice. And finally, national pride and patriotism will be used to send young, working class victims off to be human fodder in an effort reinforce U.S. imperialist domination. Anarchists, and all progressive movements, must stand in opposition to this military aggression as we would any other. It is only through active struggle against all forms of terrorism, be they religious, capitalist, or that of the State, that we can bring the global cycle of violence to an end once and for all.

## **FINDING HOPE IN TRAGEDY**

From within the unspeakable tragedy and devastation that took place on Tuesday, September 11, we see seeds of hope that point to a brighter future. Thousands of ordinary people have been lining the streets to help with the rescue effort, often risking personal safety and well being. Blood donation clinics are filled to capacity. Food, clothing, supplies and shelter are freely shared among the survivors and rescue workers in a completely spontaneous and self-organized network of solidarity and mutual aid. It is in these selfless acts that we see the seeds of hope for a future self-managed, egalitarian, classless, stateless society free from all forms of hierarchy and domination. An anarcho-communist future is possible!



# Capitalism is the Disease - Anarchism is the Cure

We find ourselves once again on the brink of an abyss; facing the horrendous prospect of propulsion into war as the result of decisions made and actions taken by a relative handful of statist, authoritarian bigots and fanatics. Once again, on each side in the coming conflict, those in authority will expect (and receive) the ultimate sacrifice from those they govern - their lives for 'the cause'. How is it that so few can cause such misery and terror to so many; and how can they be stopped?

Imperialism, the ability of countries to globally and locally dictate trade relations with other countries, is a feature of a small number of powerful capitalist states. The policies of imperialist nation states are largely dictated by the major companies based there. As the dominant world superpower, the government of the USA is in a very strong position to dictate trade relations with other countries, and does so (US foreign policy is dealt with in a separate article). The ultimate sanction of all nation states against rival nation states is war.

The military apparatus of the state (armed forces and associated hardware) means it is ideally suited to waging war on its rivals - the state is the 'war machine'. The repressive apparatus (police, courts, prisons etc.) keeps any internal dissent under control.

At the same time as existing in a violent form, the state exists in our attitudes and interpersonal relationships - placed there by tradition on one hand and the media on the other. The mainstream media functions as a capitalist apparatus of consent, responsible for the mental subjugation of the people, and controlling of our hearts and minds. President W Bush's call for a "war against terrorism" is self-contradictory, since war is the promotion of terror, bloodshed and death, in pursuit of military objectives (i.e. power politics, economics, religion). Most of the mainstream media didn't question this however, and were quick to relay the war-on-terrorism message around the world, inflaming public opinion in the process.

Wartime being a time of 'national crisis', the sense of 'national identity' is reinvigorated in people's minds. Nationalism, racism, religious intolerance and hatred are much more in evidence in a nation at war. The climate for debate and dissent is somewhat sti-

fled. As the anarchist Randolph Bourne wrote: *"The nation in wartime attains a uniformity of feeling, a hierarchy of values, culminating at the undisputed apex of the State ideal, which could not possibly be produced through any agency other than war"*.

To recap then, the state is the war-machine, the driving force of which is capitalism. The capitalist state also exists inside our minds by influencing our beliefs and values via the media. So working class people come to hold reactionary and false ideas such as nationalism, racism, xenophobia, sexism etc. This divides us from each other and weakens our ability to respond to the state's destructive and dangerous maneuvers, including war.

Anarchist social revolution will smash the capitalist economy. Capitalist industry will be expropriated and private property abolished, along with currency, and exchange generally. People will socialize the means of production, distribution and communication etc. for the benefit of society as a whole. Production and distribution of goods and services will be organized by workers' and community organizations: from each according to their ability, to each according to their need.

Useless enterprises (insurance and financial services, advertising, sales, lawyers, stockbrokers....) will be closed, workers councils will take over and run those that serve a useful purpose. In this way the capitalist engine of imperialism and war is wrecked. With banks abolished and debts cancelled the economic inequalities that exist between nations at present could at last be addressed. We must strive for and establish egalitarian social relations between all people in all parts of the world.

Equally fundamental to anarchist ideas of social revolution, the dismantling of all state apparatus is the disarming of the war machine. Only when people abolish church and state can they organize society in a non-hierarchical, equal and free manner.

The struggle for anarchist revolution is principally a struggle for the hearts and minds of working class people. We have to win the 'battle of ideas' in order to transform society, to demonstrate that anarchist and anti-authoritarian ideas about society and methods of working are the most useful and

relevant for this purpose (although obviously we do not exclude good ideas simply because they have not been labeled 'anarchist'). Clearly anarchist ideas must become much more popular, widespread and well understood than they generally are now in order to achieve a stateless, classless social revolution. This means counteracting the mainstream media of today, and working towards a society in which genuinely free and diverse media could flourish.

A successful anarchist revolution then, would result in society being organized by the free association and federation of workers (and peasants, in some countries), with decisions made directly by the people affected by them. A new era, of international solidarity, peace and co-operation is born. Relations between peoples unimpeded by capital will improve, and solidarity increase to such an extent that future war becomes unthinkable to the citizens of earth. The people never declared war on any nation, but by our tacit acceptance and passivity we allow war to be waged.

As Chilean anarchists CUAC-Chile say: *"We know that the task of stopping barbarism is not one of governments, who play with us as with pieces of chess, and they are not interested in the human cost of this macabre game. This responsibility belongs to the actions of solidarity of the people, in reviving a new internationalist spirit that can face up to death. Today our call is for peace, but we know that if we want peace, we should declare war on capitalism and on state power. But we will categorically reject participation in any war that is not against our true enemies. No war between nations, No peace between classes! Stop irrationality and massacre!"*

The reason why so few have caused such misery throughout history to so many in wars is: (a) because they occupy positions of wealth and authority, and (b) due to the deception of and acquiescence by ordinary people. As anarchists we aim to: (a) eradicate the principle of authority from human relationships and the state war machine from society, and (b) demonstrate to people that collectively they are powerful, and that their real allies are their neighbors in foreign countries, not their local ruling class. The people of the world have far more in common with one another than with any variety of ruling class parasite. We should band together to overthrow all states (capitalist, 'communist', religious, or otherwise) and live in peace.



# For Us, Nothing... For All, Everything: The Communist Tradition in Anarchism

by Camille

In NEFAC's 'Aims and Principles', it says that the federation is "an organization of revolutionaries coming from different movements of resistance who identify with the communist tradition within anarchism" [1]. This may raise eyebrows when read by many people as they ask themselves what the hell we mean by that. Anarcho-communists, libertarian communists, communist-anarchists... Is this a contradiction? Was there a secret alliance between Marx and Bakunin, Lenin and Makhno, Mao and Pa kin? Are we Bolsheviks in disguise aiming to subvert anarchism and recruit little soldiers for *The Party* (whichever it is)? Of course not! Let's look at it closer.

What does the word communism really mean? Communism is the doctrine that says we should put all means of production and distribution, as well as the socially produced wealth, in common. It's the dream of the abolition of class system and wage slavery, replaced by a worldwide community, without classes. In our opinion, real communism can only aim at the destruction of the State, because the State is the political organization based on domination and class rule. As long as there is a State, there can be no communism because there is necessarily a system of classes (at least one: bureaucrats!).



Carlo Cafiero, Italian Internationalist  
and early anarcho-communist

While everyone does not agree on this, there can be communism and centralization (like there can be self-management and centralization). Communism can adapt to many political and organizational frameworks. We are for a federalist organizational framework, based on direct democracy. This said, an anarchist framework does not necessarily imply a communist framework (and vice versa). There are individualist anarchists, collectivist anarchists, mutualist anarchists, etc. Just like there are authoritarian communists, council communists, primitive communists, etc. We are anarchist communists. That's why we say "anarcho-communists" or "libertarian communists". One word defines the other.

## The Roots of Anarchism

Anarchism was born, and developed, in the International Working People Association (IWPA, or First International, 1864-72). In the beginning, the International was conceived as a pact between British and French trade unionists so that French workers would not be used to break strikes in Britain (which was a common tactic used by British bosses at the time). The organization spread and rapidly grew to include more than two million workers in its midst. It was acting as much as a solidarity center - organizing collections in various countries to help other strikers, for example - as a revolutionary laboratory where many socialist tendencies were present. Even if there were theoreticians and social movements that led the way - such as Proudhon - anarchism as a doctrine and movement crystallized in its midst around activists like Mikhail Bakunin, Carlo Cafiero, James Guillaume and movements like the watch makers of the Swiss Jura, the Italian and French craftsman and the Spanish workers.

The first anarchists were generally collectivists and were opposed to the 'communism' defended by Marx and others. Their idea was that the workers of a given

work place should seize the means of production and manage them together. They were to become the collective owners of the factory by the means of their associations (much like a cooperative). The distribution of the wealth was to be done essentially by a remuneration based on the

***"We must be communists, because we are anarchists, because anarchy and communism are the two essential terms of the revolution."***

amount of work given by each worker. The problem was that this way we risked ending up in a sort of collective capitalism. What's more, there was no guarantee of solidarity, and those who were not actual 'workers' didn't have a say and were essentially dependant upon the workers. The situation of children, the elderly, the physically challenged, etc., in this system would not have been much better than their situation in the old one.

The criticism of the collectivist model developed in the 1870's. "The type of anarchism which appears when collectivism is worked out in more detail is communism. This is the view that it is not enough for the instruments of labor to be held in common, but that the products of labor should also be held in common and distributed on the principle of the slogan, "From each according to ability, to each according to needs." The communist argument is that, while people are entitled to the full value of their labor, it is impossible to calculate the value of any one person's labor, for the work of each is involved in the work of all, and different kinds of work have different kinds of value. It is therefore better for the entire economy to be in the hands of society as a whole and for the wage and price system to be abolished." [2]

Compared to collectivism, which is only interested in producers and only gave rights and a voice to people as such, communism had the advantage, by abolishing the idea of a family wage, to free women who wanted independence from their husbands and open the door to the recognition of



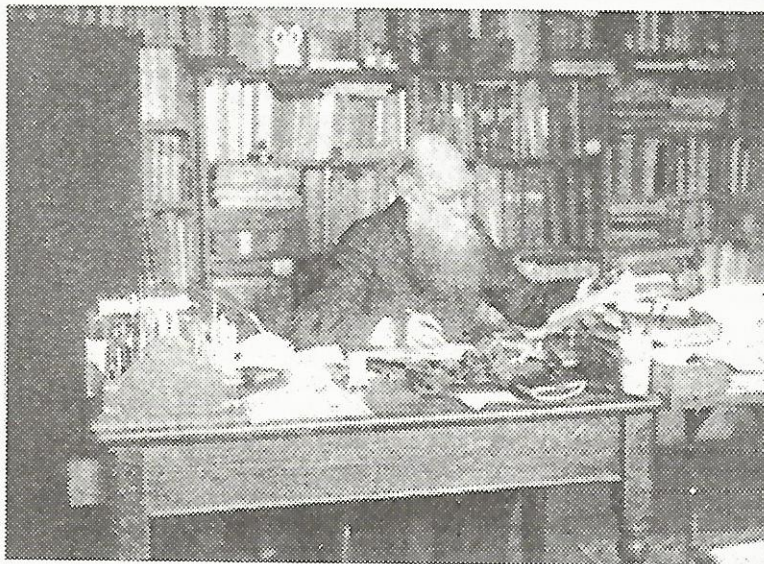
'women's labor' which has been traditionally relegated to the home, and therefore hidden. In other words, while collectivism only gave value to the social production of wealth, communism reconized both social production and reproduction and all people, without exception, have an equal right to socially produced wealth, whether they directly participate in it's production or not.

It was in 1880, at the conference of the Jura Federation [the anti-authoritarian worker's federation of the mainly French-speaking Swiss Jura], that for the first time an anarchist conference opted in favor of communism as a mode of economic organization. Here's how the Italian revolutionnary Carlo Cafiero was defending the communist thesis at this conference: "One cannot be an anarchist without being a communist. Indeed, the slightest hint of limitation carries with it the seeds of authoritarianism. It could not show itself without promptly spawning law, judge and gendarme. We have to be communists, because the people, who do not understand the collectivists' sophisms, have a perfect grasp of communism, as friends Reclus and Kropotkin have already indicated. We must be communists, because we are anarchists, because anarchy and communism are the

***"Going on from collectivism and reacting against Marxism, they postulated a more sophisticated form of revolutionary anarchism - an anarchism containing the most carefully considered criticism of present society and proposals for future society."***

two essential terms of the revolution." [3]

"The leading figures of the anarchist movement at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century - such as Kropotkin, Malatesta, Reclus, Grave, Faure, Goldman, Berkman, and so on - were communists. Going on from collectivism and reacting against Marxism, they



*Peter Kropotkin, leading theorist of anarcho-communism*

postulated a more sophisticated form of revolutionary anarchism - an anarchism containing the most carefully considered criticism of present society and proposals for future society. This is an anarchism for those who accept the class struggle but have a wider view of the world. [...] Since the 1870s, the principle of communism has been accepted by most anarchist organizations favoring revolution." [4]

Seen this way, we may seem to be simply living in the past. But we also draw some of our aspirations from what the anarcho-communist current became since. Among our more recent influences, look to: the journal *Noir et Rouge*, a magazine published in France in the 1950's

that tried to actualize anarchism, the organization of revolutionary anarchists in the 1970's that tried, in the post-may 1968 context, to have an organized platformist practice, the anarcho-punk explosion (focusing on DIY politics) and different contemporary anarchist organizations such as Alternative Libertaire and the Organisation Communiste Libertaire in France, the Anarchist Federation in the UK, or the Workers Solidarity Movement in Ireland. Among the non-anarchist influence (but still libertarian in our mind) we find influences in the surrealists, the Situationists (mainly Vaneigem), *Socialisme ou*

*Barbarie* and Castoriadis, the German and Italian autonomists movements, the social ecology movement, the various feminist currents and the different ultra-left and council communist currents.

- first published in *Ruptures*, French magazine of NEFAC

## For further reading...

On anarchism and anarchist-communism:

- *Anarchism*, Daniel Guérin (Monthly Review)
- *No Gods No Masters: An Anarchist Anthology*, also Daniel Guérin (AK Press)
- *A Short History of Anarchism*, Max Nettlau (Freedom Press)
- *Anarchism and Anarchist Communism*, Peter Kropotkin (Freedom Press)
- *The Conquest of Bread and Other Essays*, Peter Kropotkin (Cambridge University Press)
- *What is Communist Anarchism?*, Alexander Berkman (Phoenix Press)
- *The End of Anarchism?*, Luigi Galleani (Cienfuegos Press)

Some websites with good texts :

<http://flag.blackened.net/nefac>  
<http://www3.sympatico.ca/emile.henry>  
<http://struggle.ws/wsm>  
<http://www.afed.org.uk>  
<http://www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/Embassy/8970/>

## Notes

- 1) NEFAC Aims and Principles are available on the web at <http://flag.blackened.net/nefac/ap.html>
- 2) *About Anarchism*, Nicolas Walter, Freedom Press.
- 3) Carlo Cafiero, *Anarchy and Communism* (report to the Jura Federation's Congress of 1880); quoted in *No Gods, No Masters*.
- 4) Walter, op.



# as far as organization goes: WE ARE PLATFORMISTS!

by Nicolas Phebus (NEFAC-Quebec City)

In Quebec, and more generally in North America, anarchism and organization have not been coupled well. Indeed, the last serious attempt to build a political anarchist group in North America date's back to the adventure of the Love and Rage Revolutionary Anarchist Federation [1].

However, there have been, and there still are, organized anarchists around the world. Generations of activists worked hard on the question of organization, and, for those of us who don't want to reinvent the wheel, it is useful to look at their analysis and proposals. Even if we find good things in 'classical' anarchists like Errico Malatesta and Michael Bakunin, we at NEFAC are mainly influenced by a tradition called, for lack of a better word, 'platformism'.

## The Dielo Trouda Group and the Platform

The 'platformist' tradition started with the analysis of the anarchist defeat at the hands of the Bolsheviks during the civil war made by a group of Russian anarchists in exile. This group included such important figures as Nestor Makhno, one of the main leaders of the insurrectional army of the Ukrainian peasantry, Peter Arshinov, historian of the same movement and old friend of Makhno, and Ida Mett, passionate partisan and historian of the Kronstadt insurrection [2]. Based in Paris, the group was organized around the publication of an anarcho-communist magazine in Russian, called *Dielo Trouda* (Worker's Cause), a project originally conceived of by Arshinov and Makhno while they were rotting in the czarist prison some fifteen years earlier which was finally founded in Paris in 1925.

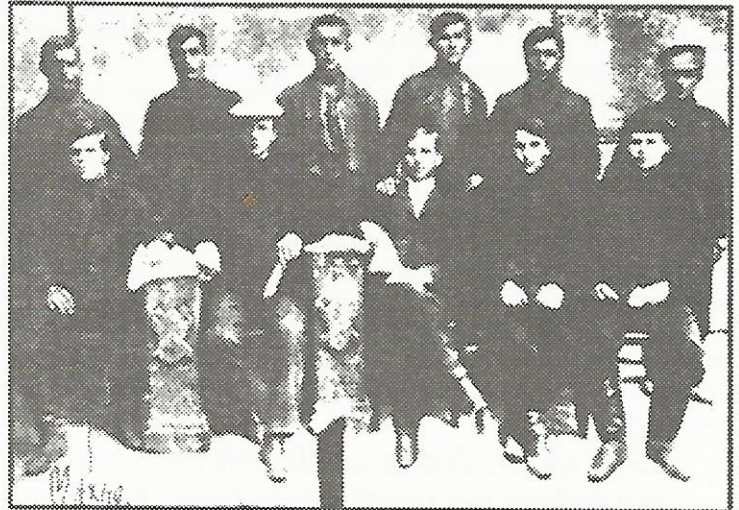
In addition to the less and less frequent letters from comrades "still in the country" and the analysis of the nature of the Soviet regime - Arshinov was one of the first to rightly call it State Capitalism - the magazine mainly concentrated on finding the cause of the "historical failure of anarchism" in the revolutionary period that just swept Europe. Like most activists that were still anarchists - many defected to Bolshevism - Dielo Trouda thought that the main cause of the failure was "the

absence of organizational principles and practices in the anarchist movement," which had its source in "some defects of theory: notably from a false interpretation of the principle of individuality in anarchism: this theory being too often confused with the absence of all responsibility." It's in June 1926 that the Dielo Trouda group made public its research on organization in a short pamphlet titled "Platform of the General Union of Anarchists (project)" [3].

The pamphlets open with an introduction that is a devastating critique of the "chronic general disorganization" of revolutionary anarchism, a disorganization compared to nothing less than "yellow fever." From the first paragraph, the authors are ruthless: "it is very significant that, in spite of the strength and incontestably positive character of libertarian ideas, [...] the anarchist movement remains weak despite everything, and has appeared, very often [...] as a small event, an episode, and not an important factor." To remedy this state of affairs, the authors think "it is time for anarchism to leave the swamp of disorganization, to put an end to endless vacillations on the most important tactical and theoretical questions, to resolutely move towards a clearly recognized goal, and to operate an organized collective practice." They proposed the founding of "an organization which [...] establishes in anarchism a general and tactical political line".

The text of the Platform as such is divided into three parts (general, constructive and organizational). In general, the first and second parts are a rather classical expose of anarcho-communism in which Dielo Trouda is only distancing itself on a few points. One of the main points is the primacy of the class struggle in society and its leading role in

social change that is affirmed right at the start: "There is no one single humanity, there is a humanity of classes: Slaves and Masters" and "the social and political regime of all states is above all the product of class struggle". This position, which also refuses the "humanist" positions, draws a clear line of demarcation that runs through the whole document. Dielo Trouda is resolutely basing itself in the social anarchism camp, strongly pro-class struggle. The constructive section has the advantage (and inconvenience) of the benefit of the Russian experience. Advantage because we get out of the



Nestor Makhno's first affinity group, Ukraine, 1907  
(a strapping young Makhno seated on the lower left)

abstract optimism so important to followers of Kropotkin, inconvenient however because the Russian situation in 1917 does not have much in common with the one we are currently living. In this sense, even if also dated, the study of the Spanish experience would be more productive.

Another point where the platform is departing from traditional anarchism is on the question of patriarchy and it is, unfortunately, to register a sharp set back. Indeed, none of the questions related to patriarchy - be it the oppression of women, sexual repression or the family and the education of children's - are addressed. The word 'women' doesn't even appear in the document! Nevertheless, even if it's not in the



same manner that we would address the subject today, the question was far from ignored by other anarchist currents. If we can understand that Dielo Trouda was not really inspired by the example of French individualist anarchists - who go really far in their critique of patriarchy and the bourgeois moral order - other revolutionary anarchist documents, similar to the platform, had nevertheless addressed the issue. The Program of the Alliance of Social Democracy, the first ever anarchist organization, founded by Bakunin in 1864, advocated the equality of men and women and says that children "are neither the property of society, nor the property of their parents but belongs to their future freedom". Four years later, Bakunin's demands at the third conference of the First International include: "firstly, the abolition of the right to hereditary property, secondly, the complete legalization of the political and social rights of women with those of men, thirdly, the abolition of marriage as a civil, political and religious institution".

Closer to the platform, the Anarchist Program, written by Malatesta and adopted by the Italian Anarchist Union in 1920, also demands the "reconstruction of the family in such a way that it results from the practice of love, freed of any legal chain, any economic or physical oppression, any religious prejudice" and concludes "we want bread, freedom, love and science for all". The question was not only theoretical; in the United States anarchists had already moved to practice it. So, when the platform was published, it had already been fifteen years since American anarchists, among them Emma Goldman, were demanding the legalization of abortion and the free circulation of information on contraception. In Spain, a few years later, they would go much further, thanks to the action of the Mujeres Libres. Even the old enemy of Dielo Trouda, the Bolshevik government, had legally made women the equal of men, legalized abortion and homosexuality during its first week in power! In short, this 'oversight' was a truly important theoretical weakness, a weakness that still has repercussions today.

Where the platform really distinguishes itself from classical anarchism is at the level of its organizational proposals and the positions that follow. In order to create a united organization, Dielo Trouda refused the synthesis of these different currents of anarchism as proposed by Sebastien Faure and

Voline, because "such an organization [...] would only be a mechanical assembly of individuals each having a different conception of all the questions of the anarchist movement", and that of anarcho-syndicalism because it "does not resolve the problem of anarchist organization, for it does not give [it] priority". The platform instead proposed "to rally active anarchist militants to a base of precise positions: theoretical, tactical and organizational (i.e. the more or less perfect base of a homogeneous program)".

The activists of Dielo Trouda considered this double question of the organization and of the revolutionary program to be vital to launch the anarchist movement on a clear path. They indeed thought of the platform as "the outlines, the skeleton of such a program" and wanted it to be the "first step towards rallying libertarian forces into a single, active revolutionary collective". It was however clear that the platform could not be the definitive program of revolutionary anarchism, and it belonged to the future organization "to enlarge it, to later give it depth, to

***"The activists of Dielo Trouda considered this double question of the organization and of the revolutionary program to be vital to launch the anarchist movement on a clear path."***

make of it a definite platform for the whole anarchist movement".

So the platform was defending the necessity of a theoretical and tactical unity, formulated in a program. This necessity was rejected by the partisans of a "synthesis" model of organization, who either didn't see its utility (Faure), or believed it was premature and thought the proposed method to be "mechanical" (Voline). In the camp of anarcho-syndicalism, they of course agreed with this proposal, the problem was that the platform specifically rejected the program of syndicalism...

Dielo Trouda then introduced a simple

principle, collective responsibility that was to draw the fire of critiques. The basic idea of collective responsibility was that "if we collectively agree on political positions and a determined line of action, it is in order that each member apply it in its political work. What's more, when we agree on work to do and a way to do it, we become responsible to one and other, of its execution. The collective

responsibility, finally, is nothing more than the collective method of action" [4]. This idea was however attacked by the Italian anarchist militant Errico Malatesta, who went as far as to compare it to the discipline of the army.

To hold all of this together, the platform proposed the inescapable principle of federalism, which was said to "reconcile the independence and initiative of individuals and the organization with service to the common cause". Dielo Trouda warned, however, against a usual distortion of libertarian federalism: "the right, above all, to manifest one's 'ego', without obligation to account for duties as regards the organization" and rather advocated that "the federalist type of anarchist organization, while recognizing each member's rights to independence, free opinion, individual liberty and initiative, requires each member to undertake fixed organization duties, and demands execution of communal decisions." Of course, in order for all that to work beyond the strictly local level, the stated goal of the platform, we need to give ourselves the necessary structures. The Dielo Trouda document does not develop a lot on the matter, but mentions the relevance of a decisional congress and an "executive committee" to coordinate the activity of the organization. Having mandated members to carry on certain duty seemed to be too much for some who saw there the embryo of a dictatorial authority...

Where the platform distances itself the most from classical anarchism is probably regarding the role assigned to anarchists during a revolution. Indeed, for Dielo Trouda, "the role of the anarchists in the revolutionary period cannot be restricted solely to the propagation of the keynotes of libertarian ideas". But then, what is this role? For the

***continued on page 32***



**Peter Arshinov**



**Nestor Makhno**



authors, "anarchism should become the leading concept of revolution", they specify that "the leading position of anarchist ideas in the revolution suggests an orientation of events after anarchist theory" which should definitely not be confused with "the political leadership of the statist parties which leads finally to State Power". This idea of the "leading concept" was to get on the nerves of many anarchists and was to be severely critiqued.

## ***"We need a force that organizes the driving power of libertarian ideas which is necessary for preserving the anarchist orientation and objectives of the social revolution."***

The authors had vivid memories of the Russian revolution and reminded us that "although the masses express themselves profoundly in social movement in terms of anarchist tendencies and tenets, these tendencies and tenets do however remain dispersed", therefore, we need a force that "organizes the driving power of libertarian ideas which is necessary for preserving the anarchist orientation and objectives of the social revolution". This force will be the anarchist organization according to the platform. The anarchist organization must "manifest its initiative and display total participation in all the domains of the social revolution: in the orientation and general character of the revolution; in the positive tasks of the revolution, in new production, consumption, the agrarian question, etc. On all these questions, and on numbers of others, the masses demand a clear and precise response from the anarchists. And from the moment when anarchists declare a conception of the revolution and the structure of society, they are obliged to give all these questions a clear response, to relate the solution of these problems to the general conception of libertarian communism, and to devote all their forces to the realization of these."

### **The Relevance of the Platform Today**

The members of the Dielo Trouda group have the merit to have reflected on means to get militant anarchism back on its track. Their solutions can, still today, serve as a departing point to build an organized and coherent anarchist practice. Of course, we are far from approaching the platform like a bible (or a little red book!), and we are aware

that it has some deficiencies, most notably on the question of patriarchy, like we've said, and on the question of the autonomy of social movements.

One of the mistakes of the first 'platformists' was, paradoxically, to put too much hope in the existing anarchist movement. Indeed, they were sure to rally the majority of activists to their concepts. Can we really be surprised, given the virulent attacks of the platform, that it didn't work? Nevertheless,

even today, it is still a trap we easily fall into. NEFAC didn't avoid it. We have spent a lot of time discussing and trying to convince the activists of

our region. We are forced to acknowledge our failure... Is it a bad thing? Not entirely. Indeed, looking at what is actually done - and not only what is said, we are far from sure that the future of revolutionary anarchism lies in anarchist activists. Maybe if anarchists stopped trying to convince one another, they would have more time to give to the rest of the population? As far as we are concerned, we've decided to acknowledge the simple fact of the division of our movement and we have decided to "stop talking about it and start doing it".

What we understand of the platform is the necessity to organize seriously. Which means to give ourselves the means to go forward, and so simple things like a democratic structure with decisional conference, a discussion list, dues, mandated work committees, etc. We also know that anarchism only has limited roots in the region, and that we will need to develop a host of political positions on a variety of subjects in order to remain innovative. To us, the question of tactical and theoretical unity is just common sense and, what's more, a process of continuous debate.

"It's goal not being the seizure of power, the anarchist organization can neither be a party nor a self-proclaimed vanguard. It is rather an acting minority within the working class. Its hope is to serve as a libertarian rallying point and take part in the theoretical and practical fight against all authoritarian ideologies. It is first and foremost a force of proposition that tries to rally people, by example and suggestion, to its political points of view. [...] Considering that any revolutionary period must be preceded by organizations able to rally people to the anarchist alternatives and methods, we believe that a strong anarchist organiza-

tion, rooted in struggles, is necessary. Let's be clear, however, we don't think that NEFAC is, right now, such an organization (but we are working on it!)" [5]

- first published in *Ruptures*, French magazine of NEFAC.

Makhno and Dielo Trouda on the web... Some of the text written by Makhno for Dielo Trouda are now available on the web at <http://www.spunk.org/library/writers/makhno/sp001781/>

Anarchist Platform is an international discussion list on platformism... The comrades of the Worker's Solidarity Movement (an Irish platformist group) have set up an international discussion list for revolutionaries that claim a link to the *Organizational Platform of the Libertarian Communists*. The list has subscribers from all continents but the exchanges are mainly in English. To know more, don't hesitate to visit <http://flag.blackened.net/revolt/platform.html>

### Notes

- (1) See Wayne Price's "Love & Rage" piece elsewhere in this magazine.
- (2) See respectively *History Of The Makhnovist Movement*, by Arshinov (Freedom Books, London) and *The Kronstadt Commune* by Mett (Solidarity, available on the web at <http://flag.blackened.net/revolt/russia/mett.html>). Both are available through AK Press ([www.akpress.org](http://www.akpress.org)).
- (3) Today we usually refer to this text as the "Arshinov's Platform" or the "Organizational Platform of the Libertarian Communists" (the title used by those who identify with it). All quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the Platform [the text is available online at [http://flag.blackened.net/revolt/platform/platform\\_preamble.html](http://flag.blackened.net/revolt/platform/platform_preamble.html)].
- (4) The Question of the Revolutionary Anarchist Organization, position of the Groupe Emile-Henry (NEFAC-Quebec), see <http://www3.sympatico.ca/emile.henry/orge.htm> for a French version.
- (6) The Question of the Revolutionary Anarchist Organization; Groupe Emile-Henry



## Nine Years of the

## LOVE &amp; RAGE

## Revolutionary Anarchist Federation

by Wayne Price

A new wave of radicalization is spreading around the world. Federations of anarchists are being organized in the U.S and Canada, and in other countries. The "platformist" current within international anarchism, with its emphasis on the need for anarchists to organize themselves, is having worldwide effects. In these conditions, it is not surprising that there should be an interest in the last major attempt to build an anarchist federation in North America: the Love and Rage Revolutionary Anarchist Federation (L&R). Founded in 1989, it lasted to 1998, almost ten years, with branches in Mexico (Amor y Rabia) and in English-speaking Canada.

It came out of a very amorphous anarchist movement, whose main continental organization had been almost yearly "gatherings". In various cities around the U.S. and Canada, anarchists would get together, attend workshops, talk with each other, eat vegetarian food, play together, engage in "pagan rites", and then go home. Decisions were not made and lasting structures were not set up.

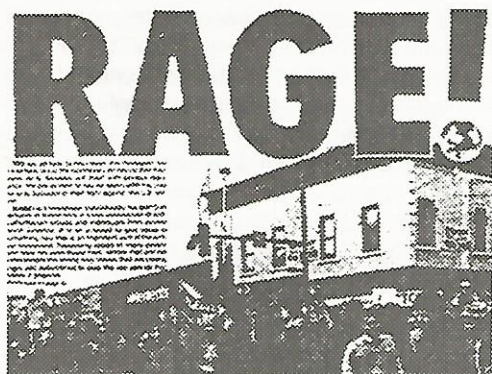
In this milieu, a minority began to call for the establishment of a continental anarchist newspaper. There were, of course, already a small number of anarchist periodicals, each

expressing the views of the individual or small group which put it out. The idea was for a newspaper which reflected the views of a continental body of supporters, who existed to participate in putting it out and distributing it. The supporters of the "newspaper project" soon realized that this implied some sort of organization.

People of various backgrounds and anarchist persuasions met to establish the Love and Rage Federation. A key role was played by a group from Minneapolis, Minnesota, calling itself the Revolutionary Anarchist Bowling League (RABL or "rabble"). Another group came from the former Revolutionary Socialist League (RSL). This was a group which had evolved from Trotskyism to anarchism. The RSL (of which I was a member) had never regarded the state-capitalist Soviet Union as a "degenerated workers" State, as did orthodox Trotskyists. It had interpreted Marxist orthodoxy in the most libertarian manner possible, such as emphasizing Marx's writings on the Paris Commune, or Lenin's *State and Revolution*. When this became impossible to continue, it moved toward anarchism. The RSL officially dissolved at the time of the founding of Love and Rage; most ex-members leaving politics. Some of us became involved in the setting up of the L&R and its newspaper, which was also called 'Love and Rage'.

Love and Rage was distinguished from most of the anarchist movement in a few important ways. First, obviously, was the very idea that anarchists should form an organization, and, related to that, should put out a newspaper. These concepts were vigorously, not to say viciously, denounced by many in the anarchist movement. A relatively prominent anarcho-syndicalist came to the founding meeting only to denounce the very idea of founding an organization. The anarcho-primitivist Fifth Estate denounced L&R from the beginning. Many others agreed that it was wrong of anarchists to form organizations, or at least to form organizations beyond the local level. There was a widespread suspicion that the ex-members

of the ex-RSL were really doing a Trotskyist 'entry', worming their way into the anarchist movement in order to emerge with a new and larger Leninist party. Considering the course of events, this was quite ironic. However, the issue of organization, was never quite settled.

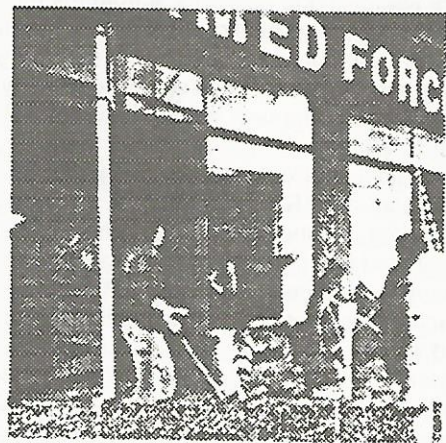


Cover of the pilot issue of 'Rage!' distributed at the 1988 Pentagon Blockade

There was a constant tension in the federation over how far to go in unifying and coordinating it. A large minority broke off because they really wanted a loose "network", not a more coordinated federation. Over time, this continued to be an issue. Due to its decentralized heritage, people were chosen for positions on the basis of geography, not politics. The continental committee which made decisions between conferences was picked this way. So was the smaller body which coordinated between that committee's meetings. Influential people were often left out of these bodies, in the hope that this would prevent the formation of a 'leadership', but instead (of course), the real leadership was kept informal and undemocratic.

Editorial decisions for the continental paper were not made by any politically responsible body, but by the production crew. This was composed of random people who volunteered and lived in the city where it was put out. At the same time, L&R was never a real federation, because it never had more than a few real local groups. Mostly it

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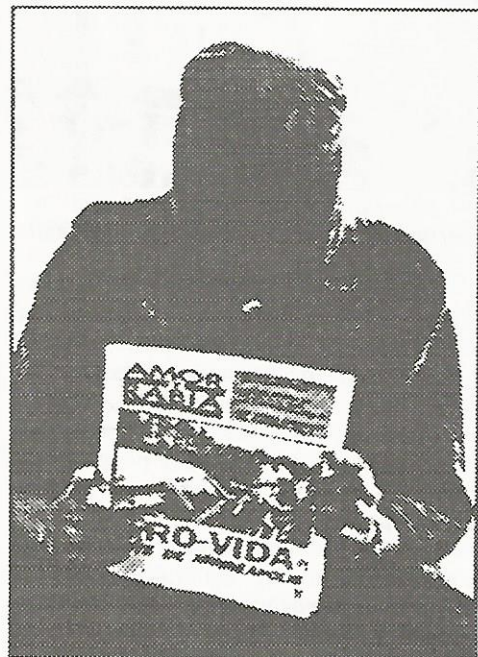


RABL goes bowling at the Armed Forces Recruiting Center in Minneapolis to protest US troops in Honduras



had about 200 members scattered throughout North America. There were a few significant collectives in a few cities, and many individuals who were willing to distribute the paper.

Besides being pro-organization, the other distinctive feature of the L&R was its left-wing focus. It was for the struggles of the oppressed. It supported national liberation struggles (although there was tension over attitudes towards the nationalist leadership of such struggles). It supported women's liberation, queer liberation, struggles of prisoners, of poor people, of youth, and of African-Americans. This may seem obvious, but much of the anarchist movement denounced this as too "left". The left was seen as old-hat and out dated. This was the explicit conception of the primitivists. Even among anarchists who were consciously leftist, such as anarcho-syndicalists, many were for workers' struggles but did not support national liberation wars or women's struggles. Too many of these rejected non-working class struggles as irrelevant diversions.



A Zapatista reads 'Amor y Rabia'

Aside from that, there was little theoretical agreement among L&R members and little effort to develop a theoretical program. Their theory, or program, was something vaguely called, 'revolutionary anarchism'. That is, we were anarchists who were "for" revolution. This distinguished us from pacifist anarchists and reformist anarchists, but otherwise was not too specific. L&R was against capitalism, but would not commit itself to 'socialism', which was associated with State ownership.

There were different views on other issues, such as African-American liberation. A minority was for the Race Traitor program: racism was the main issue in the U.S.; everything else was secondary; white anarchist should not raise their views in the African-American community. Other people had other views which also revolved around similar white-liberal guilt feelings. The problem was not so much this or that opinion on any particular topic but the lack of a serious attempt to study past theory and to develop it further. From the beginning there were people who regarded any attempt to root L&R in anarchist tradition was something "cold". There were no required readings for all members nor regular study classes. Even by the end, there were people who insisted that theory was something which they would develop out of their experience. Theory is, ultimately, nothing but the codification of many people's experience. But this approach meant constantly reinventing the wheel, and repeating previous generation's errors. However, it is not surprising that U.S. anarchists should have followed the empiricism and crude pragmatism of U.S. political culture.

The organization had an empirical 'laundry list' of good causes it was for (such as women's liberation, queer liberation, prison abolition, and so on). It tried to work out a better, more thorough and lengthy, program. For years, at the conferences, it discussed parts of an improved program. But this process was inconsistent. By the time L&R dissolved, the program was still unfinished. Ron Tabor, an ex-member of the old RSL, tried to do serious theoretical work. He sought to rethink the meaning of Marxism from an anarchist perspective. While his previous pamphlet, *A Look at Leninism*, was widely distributed, the organization stopped publishing his articles critiquing Marxism in the newspaper. People just weren't interested enough, they said.

Nevertheless, good work was done. A small number of real collectives existed and were tied together throughout North America. A real effort was made to support a Mexican group in producing a Spanish paper and literature.

We organized important U.S. support for the Zapatista rebellion (although politically this never went beyond being radical cheerleaders, instead of discussing the possibilities of a Mexican revolution). A continental anarchist paper was produced for nine years, on a more-or-less monthly basis. Some activities were done on a federation-wide basis, including participating in several national U.S. demonstrations.

However from the beginning there had

been certain undemocratic aspects of what many members meant by 'revolutionary anarchism'. One was a widespread sympathy for Leninist-Stalinist movements of the '60s and '70s. Many members admired the Weatherpeople, the German Red Army Faction, the Black Liberation Army, and other groups who wanted to create revolutionary dictatorships over the mass of people. The very last L&R issue included a very favorable article about imprisoned members of the Weatherpeople, titled, *Enemies of the State*. It would have been better titled, *Enemies of This State, Friends of a New State*.

The other undemocratic weakness was the lack of interest in, or orientation to, the North American working class. At most there was a patronizing acceptance that some of us were interested in workers as workers. As an influential member told me, workers did not identify as workers. When a major student strike broke out in New York City public colleges, our members did excellent work in organizing and leading it ("leading" in a non-authoritarian way). But they sneered at the idea of orienting the student struggle toward the workers (who, at the time were also struggling against the city government over comparable issues).

Later, our Detroit members got involved in support work for the striking newspaper workers. Our people put out a flyer raising the general strike. L&R people in New York did not want to cover this in the continental paper. One member asked if the 'general strike' was a "Trotskyist idea", so little did they know anarchist and anarcho-syndicalist history.

Ultimately contempt for the workers, their organizations (unions), and their struggles, must be undemocratic. It leads to a view that a little group of young radicals, mostly college students and ex-students from the middle classes, can transform society by themselves - without going deep into the working class and the oppressed sections of society. This is consistent with an identification with radical Stalinism.

A final conflict broke out during the last two years of L&R. Chris Day, a founder and influential member (that is, a "leader") had concluded that it was time to abandon anarchism. He told people informally that we had reached the limits of the anarchist "milieu" and it was time to move on. He wrote a paper on *The Historical Failure of Anarchism*, emphasizing the programmatic weaknesses of anarchism. He declared that no revolution could succeed without a centralized, regular army and a revolutionary state. A group formed around him, particularly of people who had never had to choose between anarchism and authoritarian



Marxism. Although they suddenly discovered the value of the international working class, their new-found Marxism was not of any of the libertarian or humanistic varieties (autonomes, council communism, CLR James, Eric Fromm, Hal Draper, etc.). It was Maoism - one of the most Stalinist, authoritarian, versions.

A small number of us began to resist, at first by writing counter documents. We were mostly, but not entirely, former members of the RSL, and were mostly older than the average member. What was upsetting and confusing to us was that most L&R members did not react to the dispute. They stayed out of it. This nonreaction was helped by the neo-Maoists' maneuver of rarely stating openly that they rejected anarchism. Instead the group talked around this. They made hints, and then denials, and then direct statements, and then withdraw the statements. If people wanted to ignore the issue, it was made easy for them. We, the group that said there was a crisis, were treated as troublemakers.

As we saw it, the issue was the rejection of anarchism for Marxism-Leninism-Maoism. We were accused of being dogmatic, not active enough, being troublemakers, wrong on any number of other issues, and so on. There is a myth in the present anarchists movement that L&R collapsed due to weakness over African-American liberation. This was never a major dispute inside the organization, although perhaps it should have been. It was raised at the last minute, the main supporter of Race Traitor politics blocking with the Maoist faction. But it was never the issue in the faction fight, that being anarchism versus Maoism.

Behind the fight and then collapse of Love and Rage was broader historical trends. About the same time that L&R dissolved, our Mexican section also came apart. The Quebecois network which had put out the anarchist *Demanarchie* also broke down. And the British group, the Class War Federation, also dissolved. While there were specific issues in each case, behind them all was the long lull in the broader movement. People were discouraged. In our case, anyway, peo-

## LOVE & RAGE

REVOLUTIONARY ANARCHIST NEWSPAPER



In this issue: Love and Rage breaks the...  
Educational Apartheid Threat of War in Mexico Iraq Indonesia Vietnam  
ment Class Struggle Political prisoners Letters and more!

VOLUME 3, NUMBER 2 FALL 1998 \$3

ple were looking for some alternative.

Marxism had been discredited by the collapse of the Soviet Union, and the officially pro-market turn of the Chinese. But it still had the attraction of its history of revolutions and its vast amount of theoretical work, unlike anarchism. It was, and still is, a real pole of attraction for many.

L&R had a brief meeting to formally dissolve the federation. The Maoist group, and those it had attracted, formed Fire By Night, for a short time. Soon they were to dissolve into the Leninist milieu. Our group has put out the anarchist journal, *The Utopian* (<http://www.utopianmag.com>). Otherwise individuals have continued to engage in the anarchist movement in various ways. Within two to three years of L&R dissolution, there was a large upturn in the anarchist movement, but there was no continental anarchist federation to participate in it.

## Lessons of the Love and Rage Federation

When I think over my experiences in L&R (as well as earlier experiences), I reach the following three main conclusions:

(1) There is a need to balance activism with theory. An activists' program needs to be based on a theory of the world, what causes oppression, what would liberation mean, what sectors of society can overturn oppression, and what can we do to help them to move toward liberation. Otherwise we are just actively jumping around. If anarchists are not to be outdone (once again) by the Marxists and other authoritarians, we have to know what we are doing. Not that every member of an anarchist federation has to fully agree with the same ideas, but there needs to be a core of members with a common approach. This does not mean that we can do nothing without a full-grown theory. Unlike the Marxists, we do not have a set of sacred books to learn from. But as we participate in struggles, anarchists should be simultaneously working on theory. There

should be study groups, a common set of readings, and a lively theoretical journal.

(2) There needs to be an orientation to the working class. This is not only for theoretical but for strategic reasons. There is no other oppressed group which has the potential ability to shut down capitalist society - and to start it up again. Only workers - as workers - can do this. No other grouping is oppressed at the heart of the process of production or has the self-interest to create a classless society. This was the insight of anarcho-synicalism.

Anarchists must continue to participate in and champion the struggles of women, queers, of oppressed races and nations. Their oppression is as real as that of workers. Their movements are as essential for liberation. But just as their issues must be raised in the class struggle, so the class struggle must be raised in them. This means participation in workplace concerns. We need to develop a serious and positive view of unions, and a set of tactics for dealing with them.

(3) There is a need for a democratic organization of revolutionary anarchists - if we are not (once again) to be outorganized by the Marxists. There can be no abstractly preordained structure for such a democratic organization, except that it be democratic. Much depends on the circumstances. The principle is that it should be as decentralized and directly democratic as possible but as centralized and coordinated as is minimally necessary. This is not a party, which is an organization for taking power (by election, or by control of a revolution). This is an instrument for participation in popular struggles and for encouraging the people to take over themselves. An anarchist organization is part of the process of popular self-organization, not its opposite. But, as is said in the *Organizational Platform of Libertarian Communists*, it needs some personnel chosen by the membership. They should be elected on the basis of their politics, not their personalities or their locations. I believe it is essential for such a democratic, programmatic body to be elected to oversee publications, and other literature, as well as to do a certain minimal amount of coordination and reacting to emergencies.

All these points are controversial among anarchists. But I have seen, all too often, the victory of the authoritarians, statists, and Marxists, over the anarchists and libertarian socialists. We have a chance to change that awful history, if we are prepared for it.



# The Practice of Direct Action: The Barcelona Rent Strike of 1931

by Nick Rider

Conventionally, the image given of the path taken by the Spanish anarcho-syndicalist union, the CNT, following the establishment of a democratic republic in April 1931 has been, put very broadly, that almost from the inauguration of the new regime it came under the domination, particularly in Catalonia, of the most intransigent wing of anarchism, organized in the Iberian Anarchist Federation (FAI). This sought immediate confrontation with the regime, launching a wave of maximalist, purely ideologically motivated, insurrectionary activism, without any intermediate objectives, a round of 'mindless revolutionism' that served only to destabilize the Republic and fritter away the strength of the CNT itself. No clear explanation is generally given of the process through which these radical elements came to the fore in what was an open, mass organization and in which, as several recent writers have pointed out, a great many of the membership were not by any means committed anarchists, it frequently being suggested that this was due to internal organizational machinations or fortuitous circumstances rather than to any more direct appeal to any section of the working class.

This image carries with it several assumptions. One is that the Republic of 1931 was indeed a genuinely democratic regime that did offer adequate means of expression for legitimate grievances, against which radical anarchists, without any previous provocation, launched actions of a kind that no government could be expected to tolerate, and which left the government with no alternative but to take repressive measures against the CNT. Another idea implied by this argument is that radical anarchism consisted entirely of an inflexible, purist ideology, a vaguely mystical 'Idea' still heavily imbued with millenarianism, in many ways unchanged since the introduction of anarchism into Spain in the 1860s and lacking, above all, any sense of development, any sense of strategy or tactics, and any concern for immediate, practical needs and aims. Often allied with this image is the argument that, in order to explain the apparent anomaly of the strength of anarchism in industrial

Catalonia, stresses the stagnation and immobility of the Spanish economy, including Catalan industry, and of rural Spain, suggesting that anarchism in the cities was simply carried over from a backward countryside, as something of a survival of pre-industrial forms of conflict.

These ideas seem to put forward a vision of new migrants into the city, and of the Catalan working class in general, whenever they were identified with anarchism, as being peculiarly inflexible and predetermined; that is, to suggest that, rather than develop their forms of organization and action in accordance with experience and circumstances, they were liable to react only in largely unreflecting manner and in terms of pre-existing, near-atavistic prejudices and fixed ideas. Conversely, it is rarely ever suggested that any of these modes of action could have formed part of attempts to respond imaginatively and dynamically to the practical demands of an urban environment.

However, over and above the more apparent weaknesses in these arguments - notably the fact that only a very small proportion of the migrants into Barcelona came from the heartlands of rural anarchism in western Andalusia - a closer examination of the record of the CNT reveals that in fact both the theory, and, more importantly, the practice of all sectors of the CNT were in continual evolution; and that, alongside the more familiar preoccupation with ideology, a constant effort was made by different groups of union militants not only to build up revolutionary movements but also, simultaneously, to come to terms with a rapidly changing social situation and respond to the apparent needs of the working class. In this essay, I shall deal with one example of this effort, in an area that was a primary social problem in Barcelona in the 1930s, housing, which was of equal importance in the developing relationship between the Republic and the mass base of the CNT. In order to understand this process it is first necessary to look at the development of Barcelona in the first thirty years of this century.

Far from being a period of continuing stagnation and backwardness, that between

1910 and 1930 was one of enormous change in Spain, and intensive urbanization. In only fifteen years, between 1915 and 1930, the population of Barcelona, in particular, officially increased by some 62%, and during the 1920s the city was one of the fastest growing in Europe. This rapid change was an integral part of the social and political crisis that would reach its climax in the Civil War of 1936.

The increase in the population of Barcelona was principally caused by two great waves of immigration, the first of which was associated with the boom set off by the First World War. The war opened up enormous possibilities for the Spanish economy and stimulated an almost unprecedented wave of industrial expansion. At the same time, however, this sudden acceleration in the economy had a tremendous destabilizing effect on the whole country, producing massive inflation, rising far in advance of wages, that made life intolerable for large sections of the rural population and set in motion migration to the cities in numbers that, despite the boom, still exceeded the capacity of industry to absorb them. Industrial expansion slowed down after the war, but, nevertheless, this exodus continued. In the case of Barcelona, which during the 1920s became the largest city in Spain, this second wave of immigration was attracted less by any industrial growth than by the massive public works projects associated with the International Exhibition of 1929.

Hence, while the official bodies occupied themselves in the building of the monuments and parks of the Exhibition and of an urban infrastructure conceived only as great avenues and transport systems, they did nothing to provide housing for the masses of immigrants who would come to build them. The only official initiative in this field was the four groups of so-called 'Cheap houses', 2,229 in total, which were by no means sufficient to satisfy the demand and were in any case, according to the future Republican Mayor of Barcelona, no more than a reproduction 'in reinforced concrete of the primitive shack'. In consequence, the rapid growth of the city was accompanied by an acute housing crisis, in which the condition of housing available in Barcelona to the



working class degenerated, while its price spiralled. In the absence of official initiatives the provision of housing was carried out by private landlords, and, particularly, by the great many small landlords. Despite the vastly increased demand for housing, such small landlords disposed of very little capital with which to build, and the result was the appearance of an enormous amount of unplanned, substandard housing.

This new housing took various forms. One of the first manifestations of the housing crisis was the spread of the shanty towns. In 1922, the then Director of the Municipal Hygiene Institute, Dr. Pons Freixa, counted 3,008 shanties in Barcelona, with 15,552 inhabitants. The majority of these shanties were not built by the inhabitants themselves, nor were they occupied for free; around Barcelona there was very little land without an owner, and rent nearly always had to be paid for shanties, no matter what their condition might be. In addition, Pons Freixa denounced the appearance of shanty 'industrialists', who rented plots of land to build shacks and let them out at abusive rents, making 'an almost always usurious profit'. This 'industry' was not a matter of a few speculators, since massive profits could be made with only limited capital, an 'endless number' of people had entered into it including many 'of very modest condition'.

With this pressure on housing, and the lack of effective legal controls under the Dictatorship, an increase in the price of housing was inevitable. After the inflationary period of the war, working class wage levels were more or less stable during the 1920s. Thus, in 1930 the average daily wage for a manual worker continued to be around 10 pesetas, as it had been for most of the decade. Similarly, most retail prices, having fallen somewhat from their peak reached at the highpoint of inflation, remained relatively stable during this period. Rents, on the other hand, registered an increase of between 50% and 150%.

Everything seems to confirm that there had been a massive increase in rents, despite the theoretical validity of the Rent Decree of 1920, which authorized only increases of 10% for each period of five years since 1914. Indeed, it can be seen that housing, previously relatively cheap, had come to be a major problem in the working

class budget; at the same time, there had been a sizeable increase in the relative of those of the lower middle class with urban property, a fact that had great potential consequences for social relations.

In addition, it should be pointed out that a situation like this gave ample room for abuses of all kinds. The rents of shanties were not subject to any market logic, and much less to any legal norms, but were determined entirely by the ambition of the landlords, since the desperation of the tenants obliged them to accept anything that

***"The leading syndicalist Joan Peiro criticized the organization's excessive dependence on industrial strikes and urged that it should establish 'district committees' to organize action around any matter of concern to the working class, not just labor questions, so that direct action could become 'mass action' and a universal form of social agitation and organization."***

was offered. Also, entirely illegal evictions were carried out, either by simple force or with the connivance of local officials. To give only one example, in 1933 a public health official wrote that in Barcelona some 20,000 dwellings lacked running water because 'miserly' landlords refused to connect it, despite the fact that this had been obligatory in the Municipal Regulations since 1891, and that this was one of the main reasons why typhoid fever was still endemic in the city. In effect, it would appear that large part of the working class housing of Barcelona functioned within the black economy, and that the inoperativeness of legal controls was virtually the norm in working class districts.

The response that the elements of the CNT gave to this situation should be considered in the context of the widespread awareness in the movement that in the years leading up to the coup d'etat of 1923 they had entered into a dead end. On the one hand, the CNT had achieved the primary objective of any syndicalist movement, that of mobilizing a majority of the working class, becoming by far the largest such movement in the world. However, the militant unionism of those years had ended in a spiral of violence, in which they were always at a disadvantage, while the achievement of wage increases had not brought real changes in living standards, due to inflation. In addition, there was also a strong awareness among many militants that the movement had not been able to go beyond a purely labor con-

text and extend its influence to other areas of society. On the contrary, a great part of even the union base of the CNT had been reduced to the level of passive spectators as the organization had become locked into a desperate, exhausting struggle involving only the most dedicated militants against the police and gunmen of the right, and its strength had been withered away. However heroic, the results of such a struggle, either in purely practical terms or for the building up of a genuinely participatory social movement, were seen to be simply not proportional to the prodigious effort involved. The 1920s were years of intense debate among sectors of the CNT as they struggled to remedy the evident weaknesses of the movement.

One aspect of these debates, the most familiar, was the in many ways theoretical dispute between, broadly, the 'syndicalist' and 'radical anarchist' wings of the CNT, as they each strove to give a particular orientation to the organization, or more precisely to prevent it from being controlled by the other tendencies that they considered to be harmful deviations.

Another, however, was the concern, seen among militants in all the main tendencies, to find new methods, more broadly based than those of straightforward industrial conflict, that would, within a libertarian structure, increase the movement's effectiveness, its implantation in society, and its resilience before repression. This concern led to considerable discussion of the nature of one of the basic principles of the CNT, that of direct action, and of the need to extend its practice in order for the workers' movement to become a genuine alternative system of social organization capable of dealing independently with all kinds of social problems. An open letter sent by a number of radical anarchists held in Barcelona prisons in 1925 spoke of the need for anarchist ideas to leave the 'abstractions of thought' and be given immediate practical form in the agitation of the movement.

From another wing of the CNT, the leading syndicalist Joan Peiro criticized the organization's excessive dependence on industrial strikes and urged that it should establish 'district committees' to organize action around any matter of concern to the

***continued on page 38***



working class, not just labor questions, so that direct action could become 'mass action' and a universal form of social agitation and organization.

In practical terms this concern was reflected in a belief that the movement should try to give answers to all the urgent problems of the working class, of which, it was generally agreed, housing was one of the most acute. This attitude was expressed soon after the Berenguer government, appointed after the fall of Primo de Rivera in January 1930, permitted the re-emergence of the CNT. Shortly after the reappearance of the Barcelona CNT newspaper, *Solidaridad Obrera*, in September the same year, an article announced a forthcoming campaign on rents. The imbalance between earnings and what was indispensable to live was unbearable, and in this the primary factor was that of rents, which had reached intolerable levels. Despite this, however, the subject was hardly spoken of, and it was necessary to expose it, because there was no other question that could be of so much interest to so many families, including many of the lower middle class, civil servants, and so on, who

put up dykes against the exploitation of the producers, but we have almost entirely forgotten to combat exploitation in the field of consumption'. It went on to describe how building and property produced profit far superior to those of industry, and how rents consumed a third of earnings. 'We believe,' it said, 'that there is a magnificent field for action here; great masses of the population, indifferent to the struggles carried on by the unions and often enemies of union demands when these make themselves felt through prolonged strikes, would understand actions of this kind and unite their voice of protest to ours.'

In early 1931 there were already local tenants' movements in some districts of Barcelona. The general protest movement, however, came out of a meeting of the CNT Construction Workers' Union of April 12, 1931, the same day as the municipal elections that would bring in the Republic. There, Arturo Parera, a building worker and radical anarchist, proposed the creation of the 'Economic Defense Commission of the Construction Union', which would study 'the expense that corresponds to each worker

for the wage earned. For example: on the question of rents, no more will be paid than that which has a relation to the income of the family concerned.' The Commission was established with the provision that it could be expanded to include the other unions and to deal with other problems as well as rents. Among its first members were Parera and Santiago Bilbao,

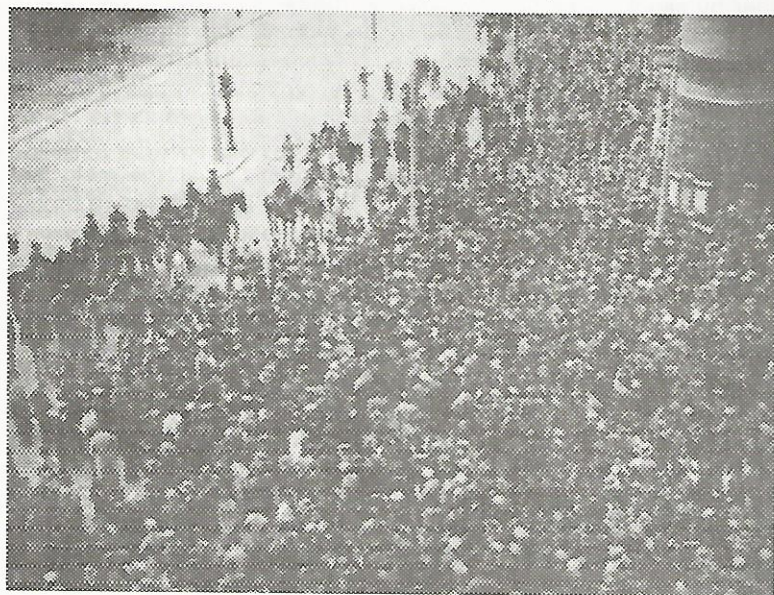
who would become the most visible figures of this movement. Immediately afterwards came the proclamation of the Republic, something that caught most of the CNT and many of the Republicans themselves by surprise. Here it is necessary to point out that the Republic, after fifty years of agitation in which it had always signified the opposition to the dominant regime, aroused expectations among the working and lower middle classes that were as broad as they were ill-defined, and the general assumption

was that, even if it were not a regime of total equity, it would at least bring an end to repression and permit the free expression of popular discontents. Moreover, these expectations had been encouraged to the maximum over the preceding month by republican politicians, and by none more so than by the Catalan Republican Left, the *Esquerra Republicana*, absolute victors of the elections in Catalonia, whose propagandists had presented a prospect of sweeping change following a change in regime. In a society that was traditionally heavily authoritarian, something that had been only been accentuated by seven years of dictatorship, the apparent breakdown in the structure of authority produced a general outburst of accumulated social resentments.

For the unions, this meant a massive intensification in their activities. In only one month, May 1931, 105,000 new members were admitted into the Catalan region of the CNT, and, on May 28, *Solidaridad Obrera* said that 'the unions have been taken by assault by the workers', who sought immediate solutions to their problems. A wave of strikes began that, continually increasing in intensity, overflowed from union structures and escaped from the control of union committees. The rent campaign was to take place within this atmosphere of generalized agitation, and the repression it attracted was also part of the general 'restoration of authority', a phrase that would become an authentic fetish for the respectable classes and press at this time.

The Economic Defense Commission of the Construction Union first presented its basic demand, for a 40% reduction in rents, to the public in the massive CNT meeting held on May 1. However, the real launching of the campaign came in three articles that appeared in *Solidaridad Obrera* on May 12, 13, and 15.

The announcement of the campaign, the first article said, had aroused a great deal of expectation among the working class, but there was considerable confusion about what exactly they were proposing. There was, it went on, a general desire for immediate material improvements, which, while entirely comprehensible, could make people act in unthinking and unproductive ways. It was necessary to find a means of organizing action to secure these immediate needs that was in accordance with the principles and organization of the CNT and which would enable the people to resolve, effectively and by their own actions, their most urgent problems, which were, the Commission believed, unemployment, the cost



*Mass meeting of the CNT in the streets of Barcelona, 1931*

were usually opposed to the workers' organization. In order to defend both workers and the people in general, the paper was going to launch a campaign of denunciation of housing abuses. It was temporarily banned shortly afterwards, however, and this campaign did not materialize.

Nevertheless, in the succeeding months there were more indications of this concern. Thus, in January 1931 another article said, referring to the established practices of the workers' movement, that 'we have tried to



of housing, and the cost of food.

On unemployment, they proposed - and it should be remembered that they were still referring principally to the building trades - that on an agreed day the unemployed should enter sites and factories and demand the taking on of 15% more workers. It was made clear that this would not be

just an act of protest or of revolutionary provocation, but would be genuinely designed to achieve its declared objective to oblige contractors to put into circulation the capital they had lying idle, thus increasing demand and reactivating the economy. This would not suppose any fundamental break with the capitalist economy, if those newly arrived in power were prepared to act with energy and goodwill.

On rents, the Commission presented the grounds for their demand of a 40% reduction, explaining how landlords had taken advantage of the housing crisis to increase their return on capital, they claimed, between 8% and 16%, and how one of the major causes of Spanish economic stagnation was the high proportion of capital retained in non-productive sectors such as property. On food prices, they proposed the formation of local defense groups, through which the working class could control prices directly, imposing reasonable prices and exposing speculators.

By achieving these minimum demands, people would improve their own situation at the same time as they learned how to organize themselves through the actual practice of direct action, until such time as they were able to carry out the hoped-for 'total change'. This would come 'when we understand that we are in a condition to assume this responsibility'. That is, it was implicitly accepted that a revolution was not immediately practicable. The important thing, however, was that people should get used to self-organization and to solving their own problems. While this would necessarily produce conflicts, these did not have to cause insuperable problems with the Republic, if this was truly a liberal regime. The Commission said that 'we will



*CNT demonstration from the early 1930's*

put forward without exaggeration reasonable measures for resolving adequately whatever matters there are in which the sufferings of the people demand rapid solution', and it would be 'madness' if capitalism or the State were intransigent before these demands.

It could be alleged that this apparent belief in the possibilities of the Republican regime was no more than a manipulation on the part of some radical anarchists - both Bilbao and Parera were prominent members of the FAI - who sought out conflicts with the object of provoking violent incidents and insurrectional actions. This would have been peculiarly Machiavellian, given the effort expended on the campaign, and was emphatically not the attitude of those who took part in it at the grassroots. Moreover, if one leading radical activist, Juan Garcia Oliver, has written that from the first he was seeking to provoke as many violent incidents as possible so as to destabilize the Republic, there is little indication that this was a majority opinion. Many radical anarchists, including such influential figures as the Urales family, felt that the movement was in no state to undertake any large-scale initiatives, and that its immediate priority was to build up its strength and expand. Similarly, they also seem to have shared in the expectation that the Republic would at least give the CNT sufficient room to allow this to take place.

In their articles the Construction Union Commission also said that they were in contact with the other CNT unions with the object of becoming a representative body of the whole local organization, and asked that sympathizers with the campaign should place their names on a register, so that they might know how many people they could count on. It was not necessary to be a mem-

ber of the CNT. This process of organization would last a long time, too long for the Commission, but nevertheless they excused it by virtue of the overwhelming work of reconstruction that at that time was borne by all the union committees. This work would be lightened, they said, precisely by the definitive establishment of the Commission, since it could take charge of the most immediate material questions and leave the committees to their more strictly administrative duties. Thus, as well as other things, it would contribute to remedying the growing disorder in the organization of the CNT. Again, the attitude shown by the Commission here contrasts with a commonly presented image of radical anarchists in the CNT as being unconcerned with organizational problems.

In the meantime, resistance to landlords had begun spontaneously. On May 4, a group of workers re-installed an unemployed family evicted from a house on the south side of Barcelona. *Solidaridad Obrera* applauded this 'generous action'. On June 23, in Hospitalet, when local people re-installed another evicted family, their action was 'greatly discussed' in the district. The number of similar incidents would increase in the following weeks.

The active campaign of the Economic Defense Commission, however, began with a series of meetings held in all the working class districts of Barcelona and the surrounding towns at the end of June and the beginning of July. In the Barcelona district, near the docks, for example, on July 1, some 1,500 people heard various speakers accuse landlords and traders of systematically robbing the people, with the complicity of the authorities. According to *Solidaridad Obrera*, the crowd consisted predominately of women. Here it is interesting to point out that, since in Catalonia there was a strong tradition that working men gave their wages complete to their wives, rent paying was generally a woman's responsibility, and in fact in all the incidents associated with this campaign women played a very prominent role. This series of meetings culminated in a mass rally held on July 5, in the Palace of Fine Arts, where the following demands were accepted as the basis of the campaign:

- that the equivalent of an extra month's rent demanded by landlords from new tenants as security should be taken as rent, so that no more should be paid for the month of July;

*continued on page 40*



- that after then rent should only be paid with a 40% reduction;
- that the unemployed should not have to pay any rent.

It was also agreed that, if landlords refused to accept the reduced rent, tenants should declare themselves on rent strike and pay nothing, always making clear that they did so as part of the general campaign. At the same time, it was also decided that action on food prices should be left until after the rent question had been solved, while unemployment would be better dealt with by the individual unions. The work of the Commission thus became concentrated entirely on the rent campaign. Their demands were quickly made known through leaflets distributed in working class districts, and it is evident that the response was immediate and widespread.

This provoked an equally immediate reaction from the principal landlords' organization, the Chamber of Urban Property. First, on July 15, they denounced the appearance of the Commission's leaflets, saying they could not believe the CNT was responsible for such a thing, which would cause alarm and prejudice the consolidation of the Republic. The following day, the President of the Barcelona Chamber, Joan Pich i Pon, visited the Civil Governor, the appointed official responsible for the administration of policing, to inform him of the concern that existed and to request the support of the authorities. On July 20, an assembly was held of all the Chambers of Catalonia, at which it is clear that the general mood was both highly concerned and extremely aggressive.

Pich and other speakers laid great emphasis on the sufferings of small landlords, saying that they were already weighed down by taxes, that they were workers who had saved a little capital with years of labor, and that in a Republic they should be protected by the law. Only the courts, they declared, could order reductions in rent. It was proposed that the Civil Governor be asked not to permit any acts of propaganda for the campaign, as being 'against all social, legal and juridical order', and at the end of the meeting it was agreed that a permanent committee be established to carry out any actions necessary for the defense of property. Also, Pich and a delegation would go to Madrid to seek the support of the central government.

Already in this assembly one can see what was to be the main characteristic of the

reaction of both the landlords and the authorities. There was not at any time any attempt to consider the matter as a social and economic problem for which solutions should be sought, but instead it was viewed as a campaign of delinquency, a violation of the rights of property, and so essentially a police problem. On July 30, the Chamber's Committee requested not only the prohibition of all propaganda for the rent strike, but also that those responsible should be arrested, as would be 'all those who hold public or private meetings to agree together with the object of committing crime of any kind'. There was not, therefore, any attempt to negotiate, but only an immovable determination to restore social discipline. Later in the campaign the Economic Defense Commission did propose a negotiated solution, but was ignored.

In the preceding weeks social tensions

***"It was this ability to identify and express widely felt needs and feelings that, together with its strong presence at community level, formed the basis of the strength of radical anarchism, and enabled it to build up a mass base of support."***

had been intensifying in the whole of Spain. On July 6, the national telephone strike, the first major confrontation between the CNT and the Republican government, had begun. More and more clashes occurred between union militants and police, and the government returned to the old practice of arresting strikers solely on 'government order', without any judicial process, fixed sentence, or right of appeal. This had always been considered one of the most oppressive practices of the Monarchy, the disappearance of which, it had been reliably assured, would follow immediately on the change of regime, and its revival had a profound impact among the working class. On July 20, in protest at the shooting of a striker by police, a general strike, which ended in considerable violence, was declared in Seville, and Miguel Maura, the Interior Minister, was already talking of the need to ban the CNT.

Hence the representatives of the Barcelona Chamber of Property found a receptive atmosphere in Madrid. Largo Caballero, the socialist Labor Minister, said he considered the rent campaign 'absurd', and Maura and Fernando de los Rios, the Justice Minister, promised Pich that they would give instructions to facilitate the rapid processing and carrying out of evictions of rent strikers. Meanwhile, on July 22, in Barcelona a bomb exploded in an underground telephone line in the center of

the city, causing no deaths or injuries but considerable damage. Though responsibility for the bomb was by no means clear, it was immediately attributed to the telephone strikers. On the same day, the Civil Governor, Carlos Espla, prohibited all meetings of the telephone union. At the same time, however, he also banned a rally of the Economic Defense Commission although nothing was said to explain what connection they had with the bomb. On July 27, the local prosecutor began legal action against the Commission's leaflets, as 'seditious propaganda'. In effect, from this time on the Commission was not permitted any public propaganda outside of the press, and so a good part of the Chamber of Property's requests had been satisfied almost immediately.

The Commission, however, responded by urging the rent strikers not to be discouraged or be intimidated by threats of eviction, since, they said, they had received a great deal more support than they had expected, and if there were enough of them they could flood the courts. It is very difficult to estimate the number of people who took part in the rent strike. Due to the destruction of the Spanish records that occurred during the Civil War there is very little documentation available. The Municipal Courts, responsible for evictions, do not have any records from the time, and the archives of the Chamber of Urban Property were destroyed by the revolutionaries in 1936, something that is itself significant. The Commission said that in July there were 45,000, and in August over 100,000 rent strikers. Even if this is taken to be exaggerated and cut by half, it is still a large number in a city of just over one million. The extreme reaction of landlords and authorities, and the memories of the participants, suggest that it was very widespread.

One CNT militant, who then lived in the Clot district of Barcelona, remembers that the response 'could not have more unanimous', since the objective was readily understandable to everybody. According to another, from Hospitalet, at one time 'a large majority' ceased paying. The Commission pointed out that strike did not demand the terrible sacrifices of industrial strikes, but instead gave people an immediate benefit. As Bilbao wrote later of the campaign, even if they achieved nothing else, by not paying rent for four months the strikers would have



saved themselves 12 million pesetas. Hence the strike could gain in strength over time, rather than exhaust itself.

From the incidents mentioned in the press it appears that the areas where the strike was strongest were the outer working class districts of Barcelona and those in the surrounding towns, notable Sants, Poble Nou, and Clot in Barcelona, La Torrassa in Hospitalet, and Santa Coloma. There were rent strikers in all the working class districts of Barcelona, however, while some towns further away from the city also set up their own Economic Defense Commissions. Mass meetings having been prohibited, communication was maintained between the strikers at the district level.

The Commission had local committees in many districts, and it was made known that one could go to the local union halls and libertarian clubs to find people to help in resisting evictions. Often, though, this was not really necessary: 'When something was going to happen, we knew by word of mouth... All the kids used to go,' one woman remembers. The resistance was based in a strong sense of community solidarity. The Commission recommended that people should insult and remonstrate with the workers who carried out evictions, and on August 26, a crowd nearly lynched two men who had obeyed the orders of a judge to help in clearing a house in Hospitalet. Also, people were reminded 'not to abandon those evicted'.

According to the CNT militant Severino Campos, in cases where tenants could not be re-installed the Commission took charge of finding them other housing. Here it should be remembered that it was already traditional among CNT militants to take in others who for one reason or another needed shelter.

With this popular base the movement proved extremely difficult to suppress. In the meantime, the number of incidents at evictions was increasing. Also, even when evictions were carried out without problems the authorities did not have sufficient forces to mount a permanent guard on each vacant house, so there was nothing to prevent tenants being re-installed at a later time.

From the end of July onwards one does not see an official policy towards the strike anything more than an even greater deployment of repressive measures. On July 3, the Assault Guards, the new Republican police, intervened in an eviction for the first time. This repressive policy hardened above all after the appointment as Civil Governor of conservative lawyer, Oriol Anguera de Sojo, on August 3.

Anguera let it be known that he considered the campaign to be simply illegal, and would not tolerate it. On August 17, Santiago Bilbao was arrested on governmental order, and was to be held until well into 1932. The justification given was that he had ridiculed authority by speaking on the rent strike at a meeting of the textile union, thus evading the prohibition on the Commission's own meetings.

At the same time, an increasingly direct

seemed rather surprised by the ferocity of the reaction they had provoked, reaffirming the realistic nature of their demands and indicating a willingness to negotiate that contrasted sharply with the intransigence of landlords and authorities. They had wanted, they said, to achieve 'the maximum benefit with the minimum of effort' and correct the abuses of the Dictatorship, but were treated only as 'trouble-makers'. As they repeatedly pointed

ed out, they were a committee of the CNT, a legal organization. From early August onwards, the Commission published a series of revelations of the tax frauds committed by landlords, who, they claimed, habitually declared in tax only half or less of their actual rents, which thus could rise entirely outside any legal control. They had imagined, they said, that in a Republic the law would be the same for all, but had found that, whereas landlords were allowed to swindle both their tenants and the State, they were labeled as criminals simply for protesting.

The Chamber of Urban Property naturally denied all of these allegations. Nevertheless, in the administrative section of the annual report of the Chamber itself for 1932 there is item which, in effect, amply confirms the rent strikers' accusations. This section, an internal document that dealt with



CNT-FAI newspapers and journals

role was assumed by the Chamber of Urban Property. Its Committee was continually in contact with the authorities, and above all with the Civil Governor, who promised them that all the necessary assistance would be given in the evictions. On several occasions the Chamber would request and obtain police protection even in cases where the Municipal Courts did not, and in October would establish its own service of men and trucks to carry out evictions themselves, since the municipal employees whose job it was to do them often did not do so because they felt intimidated or were themselves union members.

The Defense Commission, for their part,

the collection of the Chamber's own membership fees, states that an actual majority of landlords made false declarations of their properties to the tax and census authorities and to the Chamber itself, that they gave false identities and tried to conceal their own addresses, that it was 'almost impossible' to know how many properties were held by each landlord, and that the information in the majority of rental contracts was also false. Once again, then, the evasion of legal and fiscal controls appears to have been virtual standard practice among landlords.

*continued on page 42*



By late August tension was reaching its height between the CNT and the Republican authorities in Barcelona, centered, particularly, on the emotive issue of the prisoners held on governmental order. In this situation, of vital importance for the future relations between the CNT and the regime, the rent strike seems to have been particularly important. It was claimed in *Solidaridad Obrera* at the time that Anguera de Sojo had said that he was prepared to free all the 'governmental' prisoners except Bilboa. Also, in a later statement justifying his hard line, Anguera de Sojo mentioned specifically three things which he did not think could be tolerated: the use of coercion against the freedom of labor, 'violent campaigns' like 'the offensive to make tenants stop paying rent', and the circulation of unauthorized leaflets.

At the end of August the fifty-three CNT members in the Barcelona prison declared themselves on hunger strike to demand the release of those held without trial. This led to a riot in the prison on September 2, and outside a general strike broke out in protest at the treatment of the prisoners. In the prevailing atmosphere of tension, it ended in violence. Afterwards, even stricter restrictions were placed on the activities of the CNT, and over three hundred arrests were made. These new prisoners, virtually all of them held on governmental order, were, as much as any fixed ideological position, to constitute an almost insuperable obstacle to any reconciliation between the CNT and the regime.

Within the general official hard line, the repression of the tenant movement also tightened after the September strike. Federica Montseny claimed in *El Luchador* that activists involved in the rent campaign were arrested on any kind of pretext. More police protection was provided at evictions, and the police took to breaking or impounding the belongings of those evicted to prevent further reoccupations. Also, on October 2, the Chamber of Property's own trucks began operating. Finally, Anguera de Sojo demanded the names of the Defense Commission from the CNT Local Federation, and, when the latter refused to cooperate, gave it a heavy fine. From that day onwards the Commission could not even publish statements in the press, and went underground.

Even so, the strike continued, as resistance had also hardened. One landlord was threatened with pistols at an eviction. In a letter to the Interior Minister, the Chamber of Urban Property denounced the 'state of anarchy' in the 'outer districts' of Barcelona. In another, this time to the Civil

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Governor, they described an incident a few days previously when, despite the presence of the Assault Guards, who were there at the request of the Chamber, 'a crowd... of pregnant women and children' had prevented an eviction from being carried out. The officer commanding the Guards had declined to attack the women, and the Chamber pointed out to the Governor the gravity of the situation for the 'principles of authority and the necessity of maintaining order' if the law could be ridiculed in this way. This invulnerability of women would not last, however. To carry out an October 21 eviction in Poble Nou, eighty Assault Guards were sent, who closed off the street, and when a demonstration of women began to form, the Guards charged. The eviction was completed.

What really seems to have broken down the strike, however, was the practice of arresting tenants who went back into to their houses after being evicted, even when they claimed not to be responsible for their own re-installation. Tenants were easy to locate, and once it became clear that the authorities were actually prepared to arrest them in significant numbers morale seems to have sagged. The level of active resistance fell notably in November. Also, some tenants may have been led to abandon the strike by the hope that the new Rent Decree, of December 1931, would enable them to obtain redress through legal means, an expectation that would prove to be illusory. The Chamber of Property, in any case, felt able to congratulate itself in December that the rebelliousness was 'virtually terminated'.

Nevertheless, the strike never entirely ended in many districts, but continued in a more or less underground form, since the non-payment of rent, occasionally leading

to violent incidents, would be endemic in many areas and a chronic source of conflict throughout the Republican period. This was particularly the case in La Torrassa in Hospitalet, and in the municipal 'Cheap Houses', both of them major centers of radical anarchist influence. Neither was the strike a total failure elsewhere, as many landlords, unable to carry on without receiving any income, had made separate agreements with their tenants, conceding them a reduction or at least wiping off the arrears built up during the strike. As a result, many tenants felt they had at least won a moral victory.

The Chamber of Urban Property, for their part, did not feel able to relax their vigilance and at the end of the year announced that, to take advantage of the information acquired during the strike, they had made up a register of evicted tenants, which all landlords should consult before letting property. The register would be kept up to date, since the collaboration had been secured of the Municipal Courts, which would send on details of any new eviction cases.

The anarchist historian Abel Paz believes that the popular mobilization begun in the rent strike formed the basis for many subsequent anarchist campaigns. Other witnesses also remember the strike as being the initiation into the anarchist movement for many people, above all among the young, who would play a major role in the conflict of the following years. In all, it presents an image of radical anarchism much more complex than the conventional one of an unthinking 'putschism'.

In contrast, it appears here as a movement that, in addition to possessing a revolutionary ideology, was also capable of mobilizing action around objectives firmly rooted in the life and conditions of the working class. Similar agitation was also undertaken, for example, against the suppression of street trading, an essential supplement to their income for many of the poorer working class, and against gas prices. It was this ability to identify and express widely felt needs and feelings that, together with its strong presence at community level, formed the basis of the strength of radical anarchism, and enabled it to build up a mass base of support.

Similarly, agitation of this kind can be seen not to have been simply the result of a hangover of rural ideas and attitudes, but to have arisen out of an effort precisely to respond, from the position of the poorer working class, to the problems experienced in the city, and specifically to those created



by intensive and uncontrolled urbanization of the kind that had taken place in Barcelona. Equally, 'direct action' appears not as an abstract ideological proposition, but as an entirely practical form of action for sectors of the working class with urgent needs and little hope of obtaining satisfaction by other means.

The manner in which this specific campaign was carried forward also contrasts with the established image. There were, undoubtedly, many among the different groups into which even the radical wing of the CNT was divided who were more concerned with a more abstract form of anarchism. The leading figures in the rent campaign, nevertheless, who were also, as has been said, prominent members of the FAI, revealed a clear awareness of a social situation, considerable tactical agility and flexibility, and a willingness to make use of legal channels, such as denunciation of tax fraud, when it appeared that they could have practical effect. Faced with the conventional opposition between reformism and revolution, they appear, in effect, to have put forward a third alternative, seeking to obtain immediate practical improvements through the actual development, in practice, of autonomous, libertarian forms of self-organization, in such a way that they would, it was hoped, be beyond the power of the structures of the State to recuperate them.

The impact of the rent campaign was all the greater because belief in the essential justice of its demands was so widely shared. The Republic was generally seen as a historic opportunity to rectify the injustices long accumulated under a reactionary regime, and in particular to correct the abuses of the Dictatorship, an impression that had been fully encouraged by the Republican politicians. Given these expectations it was not surprising that the transition to a new regime was accompanied by a wave of strikes and other agitation, without any great need for provocation by ideological agitators. In Barcelona, it was widely recognized that the grossly exploitative state of the housing market was one of the most scandalous of the abuses of recent years, and indeed members of the Catalan Republican Left had specifically suggested that action in this area would follow rapidly upon a change of regime. In the rent campaign, therefore, anarchist militants were organizing not around revolutionary demands, but around expectations associated with the Republic itself, and among a population many of which did not previously have any fixed attitude of opposition to

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the regime.

The Republican authorities, however, showed themselves, inflexible once these demands were made. Many tenants evidently expected some intervention in their favor from the Catalan Republican Left. However, among the confused ideological baggage of even the more reforming elements in the party there was a notable reluctance to place real restrictions on the property of the lower middle class; more importantly, among the lower middle class base of the party there were many who were themselves major beneficiaries of the building boom of the preceding years.

The vague promise of an inter-class reformism thus rapidly broke down once the contradictions built up in the development of the city began to emerge. If elected politicians prevaricated, the juridical and police system of the State, on the other hand, directed in an entirely traditional manner, showed itself to possess much greater effective social power. It was a traditional liberal criticism of the Spanish State machine under the Monarchy that it was excessively subservient to oligarchical interest groups, simply responding to their wishes rather than developing an independent policy. In the situation created by the Barcelona rent strike, the State administration, above all at local level, can be seen to have functioned in an essentially similar manner, its policy consisting of little more than placing its forces at the disposal of a business organization, the Chamber of Urban Property, to restore social discipline.

It should be remembered that the status quo with regard to housing in Barcelona was one of widespread and near-institutionalized illegality, in which the law as a system of regulation of property relations was often wholly ineffective, a fact, moreover, that was no secret but was frequently denounced by many sectors well to the right of the CNT. By insisting, in the name of

legality, on the overriding priority of social discipline, therefore, the State authorities were defending this situation and allowing it to continue.

Those who became involved in the rent strike and similar campaigns responded to the reality of this situation, rather than to the ostensible legalism of the Republican regime. The frustration of the initial hopes of change, and the swift reversion of the regime to traditional repressive methods, fatally undermined the position of those within the CNT who favored a rapprochement between the union and the Republic and, in contrast, raised the standing of radical militants, who were identified, among other things, as refusing to compromise in the defense of interests in every way as concrete as those defended by more 'moderate' groupings.

This situation thus provided the natural background for a rapid radicalization of the poorer working class. In turn, this established a social base for the growth in prestige of a more defined revolutionary anarchism, found among sectors of the working class who came into conflict with the institutions of the Republic not for purely ideological reasons, but for very practical causes based in the inability of these institutions to provide constructive solutions to the problems created by the rapid economic development of the preceding years.

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from the New Socialist Group...

# Anarchism, Marxism and Renewing Socialism From Below

by Todd Gordon and Jerome Klassen

Over the last few years there has been an increase in the influence of anarchism on the left. Anarchism is attractive for a new layer of radicalizing activists, especially those working within the global justice movement. Many young activists are attracted to the anti-authoritarian and grassroots inspirations they identify with anarchist theory and practice. Many of these activists have, in turn, injected these same inspirations back into their movement work.

The growth of contemporary anarchism is related to the growing anti-capitalist sentiment amongst activists and their commitment to using more effective means of struggle. For example, a growing layer of global justice activists no longer identifies the enemy simply as "globalization" or "corporate power" but as "capitalism." At the same time, many of these activists have started to rely less on symbolic forms of protest and to engage instead in forms of struggle that build people's capacities to challenge systemic forms of domination.

It is in this context that anarchism has re-emerged. But like any progressive movement that seeks to grow and draw more people into its fold, anarchism needs to be engaged constantly in a process of critical self-examination and dialogue. Indeed, the same must be said for the whole of the revolutionary anti-capitalist left. The New Socialist Group, for example, aims to be part of such a process of critical self-examination. It is only out of such a process that a dynamic revolutionary politics - for us, a politics of "socialism from below" - can be renewed. We think a renewed socialism from below needs to be informed by the best of Marxism and anarchism.

## The Past and the Present

The history of the relationship between anarchism and Marxism has been marked by a great deal of hostility. While there is a history of differences between Marxism and anarchism that should not be obscured, their current relationship must be shaped by the demands of the present political period. Allowing debates over past revolutions to consume present discussions does little to advance the revolutionary anti-capitalist movement.

Instead, anti-capitalists need to think collectively and critically about the renewal of a revolutionary project. Despite the emergence of an anti-capitalist sentiment in recent years, revolutionary anti-capitalists remain a small, though committed, minority on the left in most of the so-called "advanced" capitalist countries, with scattered support on some university campuses and almost none in workplaces and unions. It is with this in mind that dialogue must be pursued, and the possibility of common activity considered.

First, we will sketch out a theoretical framework for building an anarchist-Marxist common front. We have two guiding assumptions: first, that the task for anti-capitalists is to build an organised and programmatically coherent social opposition to capital and to the state; and second, that neither the Marxist tradition nor the anarchist tradi-

tion has, to date, developed a complete theory of socialist revolution. Because a future revolution will not occur in the same way as, for example, the Russian Revolution (1917) or the Spanish Revolution (1936), it is our task to advance the struggle by creating a revolutionary theory, not based on historical scenarios, but on present political situations. Despite our urge to move forward, however, we believe that both the anarchist tradition and the Marxist tradition contain important insights that must be appropriated if we wish to build a larger and more effective anti-capitalist movement. In fact, we contend that the development of a larger anti-capitalist movement critically depends on a synthesis of "red" and "black" theory and practice. This synthesis could emerge by combining some of the key insights developed by both the Marxist and the anarchist traditions.

## Learning from Marxism...

A great strength of the Marxist tradition has been its systematic critique of capitalism. For Marxists, capitalism is not simply about "the right to private property" or about "the rule of corporations." While these phenomena exist under capitalism, they must not be seen as root causes of the system. As Marx revealed, capitalism is based upon a fundamental social relation between workers, who are obliged to sell their labour power as a commodity on the market, and capitalists, who own and control the means of production and who therefore employ wage-labour. For Marx, it is this social relation, a relation through which capital exploits workers to make a profit, which is central to capitalism.

Clearly, the way in which we understand capitalism has political consequences. For example, if we theorise capitalism as the "right to private property" or "the rule of corporations," we could then theorize anti-capitalism as being "anti-property" or "anti-corporate." This kind of analysis and practice ignores the exploitative social relations between workers and capitalists that lie at the heart of capitalism. It therefore ignores the political need to organise the working class to challenge capitalism. An anti-capi-





talist activism informed by Marxism, then, recognizes the domination of labour by capital as the basis for capitalist exploitation and strives to organise the working class to overthrow the system.

A third insight of the Marxist left is the idea that radical activists need to form their own political organisations. Marxists have shown that anti-capitalists need their own organisations to develop revolutionary theory, to develop strategies for their interventions in the daily class struggle, and to expose broader layers of the working class to radical ideas. Political organising has also helped to establish long-term alliances amongst various working-class and social justice organizations and thus to activate and consolidate the critical mass required to launch more sustained campaigns against capital and the state. Establishing political organizations can also improve accountability and democratic decision-making amongst activists. If these values and results are deemed important, then the new anti-capitalist left should start working towards developing more long-term and democratic organizations.

These three ideas - the critique of capitalism, the need for workers' revolution, and the need for radicals to organize themselves into political structures - represent three insights that Marxism can offer to the anti-capitalist movement.

## ... and from Anarchism

Consider, now, three important insights developed in the anarchist tradition. First, anarchists have correctly insisted that socialists must be against the state. They have correctly argued that the hierarchically structured capitalist state cannot be used as an instrument to liberate the working class from its oppression and that as an alternative to participating in states and governments activists need to build radical mass movements and structures of direct democracy from below. It is the construction of these movements and alternative institutions (e.g., workers' councils, independent media) that provides the basis for revolutionary socialist change.

A second anarchist insight that needs highlighting is a dedication to direct action politics. Instead of pleading with the state, employers, and other representatives of the ruling class, anarchists are known for taking direct action to win their short-term objectives. However, as anarchists have demonstrated, direct action can win not only short-term goals but, when organised with a view to building mass movements, it can also help to strengthen the capacities and powers of

the oppressed that will be needed to establish a democratic and self-regulating society in the future. Direct action thus becomes the method for activism because it builds the political consciousness and social capacities required for creating a self-managing society.

This commitment to direct action is connected to the larger anarchist sensitivity towards the concrete processes of struggle. According to Barbara Epstein, anarchism "has brought [to movements] an insistence on equality and democracy, a resistance to compromise of principle for the sake of political expediency. Anarchism has been associated with efforts to put the values of the movement into practice and to create communities governed by these values. Anarchism has also been associated with political theatre and art, with creativity as an element of political practice. It has insisted that radical politics not be dreary." By valuing diversity and insisting on egalitarian methods of organising, anarchism has also become a pole of attraction for many feminists and anti-racists.

These three insights - the critique of the state, the commitment to direct-action politics, and the sensitivity to the concrete processes of activism - represent three insights that anarchism can offer the budding anti-capitalist movement. It is the authors' belief that the future of anti-capitalist activism depends on uniting in practice both the Marxist and anarchist insights mentioned above.

## Revolutionary Socialism Today

This practice must begin with an honest assessment of the state of revolutionary politics. Currently, the revolutionary anti-capitalist perspective is still very much in the minority within the movement. Injecting an anti-capitalist politics into our movements must thus become a more consistent part of our work. We need to be the "loyal" but radical left wing of the movement, consistently challenging ideas that global capitalism can be reformed or that mass direct action isn't a "legitimate" form of protest.

To do all of these things effectively is very difficult. Anarchists and Marxists should therefore consider engaging in joint work. An anti-capitalist common front could involve such things as developing collective strategies for intervening in the movement and

holding joint public forums for spreading our ideas. We may also want to share space in our publications for constructive dialogue. Such collective work, aimed at rebuilding a revolutionary anti-capitalist consciousness amongst activists today, could help to renew the revolutionary anti-capitalist theoretical tradition and thus lead to a more serious and constructive engagement between Marxist and anarchist ideas.

***"We need to begin considering ways to collectively build a broad movement that can challenge reformist analyses, inspire militant mass action, and expose new layers of people to anti-capitalist ideas."***

The march organised by CLAC (Convergence of Anti-Capitalist Struggles) against the Summit of the Americas in Quebec City last April, which included both anarchists and Marxists, is one example of revolutionaries from different traditions collectively promoting anti-capitalism. The Ontario Common Front and the emerging movement against racism and war are other places where anti-capitalists from different traditions are active. But, as radicals in these coalitions we need to do more than simply be active next to one another. We need to begin considering ways to collectively build a broad movement that can challenge reformist analyses, inspire militant mass action, and expose new layers of people to anti-capitalist ideas.

The suggestions offered here should be seen as possible first steps to rebuilding revolutionary socialist politics. If we're to avoid the pitfalls of the past, we must be patient and treat the renewal of a revolutionary project as a process, and not as something that will take place overnight. Hopefully, our shared commitment to the radical transformation of capitalism can help to break down the walls currently dividing the various socialist traditions so that we can struggle to ensure that another world is not only possible, but guaranteed.

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NEFAC responds...

# Comments on Gordon and Klassen's *Anarchism, Marxism, and Renewing Socialism From Below* by Wayne Price

This is a response to the brief essay by two members of the 'New Socialist Group'. They propose greater practical cooperation between anarchists and Marxists, forming "an anti-capitalist common front." They also propose a theoretical dialogue. This may lead to eventual "synthesis of 'red' and 'black' theory and practice." They base this on the "politics of socialism from below." They assert that there are "key insights" to be learned from both Marxism and anarchism, and that followers of each tradition can learn much from the other.

Marxism, they point out, centers its social and economic analysis in the workers' role in the process of production. Politically it focuses on the effort "to organize the working class to overthrow the system." Most anarchists have long agreed with this - especially, but not only, in the anarcho-sindicalist tradition. Both Marxism and anarcho-sindicalism have been criticized for downplaying other struggles, such as that of women, of oppressed races and nations, of Gays and Lesbians, or for ecological balance. This criticism has much truth in it, but it does not contradict the continuing importance of the class struggle.

However, the heart of Gordon and Klassen's paper is its coverage of what is usually discussed under the headings of 'state' and 'party'. It lists as an "insight of the Marxist left... that radical activists need to form their own political organizations." This would be a relatively homogeneous organization, formed around an agreed-upon political program, as opposed to fairly heterogeneous, mass organizations, such as unions, workers' councils, or community organizations. Thus a radical organization is composed only of those who agree with its radical program, while a union is composed of everyone who works in a particular industry. This is a response to the objective reality that oppressed people come to revolutionary politics in layers, first a minority, then more and more, rather than all at once. The minority which "first" comes to revolutionary politics needs to organize itself to further the process of others changing their consciousness.

This is consistent with Lenin's concept of the vanguard party, but it also fits in with the pro-organizational tendency within anarchism. That includes the early Bakuninists, the *Organizational Platform of the Libertarian Communists*, the Spanish FAI with its federa-

tion of affinity groups, and the current Platformist tendency within international anarchism. The difference between the Leninist and anarchist conceptions is that Leninists center their politics around the party. The whole point of their politics is to build a centralized revolutionary party and to put it into power. Its relation to mass organizations, such as unions and workers' councils, is instrumental. Support for the mass organizations is only a method of putting the party into power.

On the other hand, the anarchist political organization exists only to promote the mass organizations. Its members may be elected to union or council positions, but it does not aim to be elected to a bourgeois parliament nor to seize power during a revolution - that is, it is not a party. As a minority, it opposes the servility of the mass, and seeks to persuade people to give up their faith in bosses and rulers. In the course of mass struggles, it openly seeks to promote self-reliance and self-organization. It consistently opposes those political tendencies which try to mislead the movements into reliance on "strong leaders".

This leads the authors to praise anarchists for being "against the state...[T]he hierarchically structured capitalist state cannot be used...to liberate the working class..." One long-time dispute between the anarchist and the Marxist movements has been whether to run in elections. Marx and Engels argued strongly for this; Lenin denounced the "infantile leftists" in the Communist movement who rejected electoralism. Most Marxists have agreed. Anarchists have mostly felt that the electoral system is corrupting for any radical movement. They do not believe that it is good for people to send someone to Congress to be political "for" them. Nor have they believed that there is a "parliamentary [electoral] road to power."

The dismal histories of the Social-Democratic parties and the West European Communist parties support this anarchist belief. So does the even briefer electoral history of the German Green Party (which has rapidly gone from being nearly-anarchist to being lap dogs for German imperialism). What is not clear, to me anyway, is where the authors stand on this vital issue. If they reject the capitalist state as an instrument of liberation, as they say, and advocate mass direction action, then do they reject electoralism as a strategy? They do not give their position.

Furthermore, it is not enough to say that "socialists must be against the state." For a long time now, radical Marxists and others have wanted to overthrow their states. They wanted to destroy the existing bourgeois-bureaucratic-military states. But they wanted to create new states. In China, Yugoslavia, Vietnam, Cambodia, and Cuba, revolutionaries overthrew the old states, only to set up new, state-capitalist, states - of course, calling them "Socialist" or "Communist" or "People's Democracies." In Lenin's *State and Revolution*, he proposed to overthrow the old, bourgeois state, and to replace it with a new, workers' and peasants' state, "a bourgeois state without the bourgeoisie." It would then, by itself, "wither away." All the effort was put into creating the new state. The "withering-away" part was supposed to happen by itself.

Anarchists sought to replace existing states with federations of popular associations. They have sought to replace the state with methods of participatory, direct democracy, with an armed, popular, militia instead of the regular police or army. They have advocated as little centralization and representation as is only absolutely necessary at the moment. The anarchists have been weak in seeing the importance of this communal federation serving as a center of power in opposition to the existing state. This was a major source of anarchist failure in the Spanish Revolution. It was recognized, too late, by the anarchist Friends of Durruti grouping. But the basic concept, of replacing the bureaucratic-military state by a federation of popular associations is correct, as against the goal of a new state.

As the authors say, "neither the Marxist tradition nor the anarchist tradition has developed a complete theory of socialist revolution." More bluntly, each has a disastrous history of failure. Anarchism has failed to make any revolutions and was marginal from the 1940's to the 1980's. Marxism has resulted first in pro-imperialist Social Democracy and then, after an attempt to start over by Lenin, in Stalinism, finally declining back into "private" capitalism, but leaving behind mountains of skulls and rivers of blood.

A new beginning is needed, and has already begun in the mass movement. We need to work together where we can, and clearly state our disagreements where we must.



# Globalization From Below: The Power of Solidarity

by J. Brecher, T. Costello and B. Smith (South End Press, 2000)

reviewed by Lucien van der Walt (Bikisha Media Collective)

The enormous upsurge of protest against the multilateral institutions that design and implement capitalist globalization has taken many by surprise. The new movement against neo-liberalism - and, in particular, the role of anarchist "black blocs" - burst onto the public consciousness with the November 1999 protests in Seattle against the World Trade Organization (WTO).

The new movement, dubbed 'anti-capitalist' or 'anti-globalization', has since organized a range of high profile actions. These include 'S26' against the International Monetary Fund (IMF) summit in Prague, September 2000, and the mass action against the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) meeting in Quebec, April 2001.

Responses to the anti-globalization movement have varied. On the far right, papers such as the *Executive Intelligence Review* have attacked the protesters as 'proto-terrorists,' whose escalating level of violence can only culminate in individual terrorism. Other rightists have strongly supported the anti-globalization movement. They see it as a way to further neo-fascist agendas of stronger national autonomy, economic protectionism, the exclusion of immigrants, and withdrawal from world affairs and so-called world government.

The left has been equally divided in response. The two main left alternatives to capitalist globalization may be defined as the 'fix it' and the 'nix it' approaches. Arguments and divisions at the World Social Forum at Porto Alegre, Brazil, in January 2001, reflected these two approaches. This forum intended to work out a way forward for the new anti-globalization movement.

The 'fix it' position advocates the reform of global capitalism and its institutions, such as the IMF, WTO and United Nations. The 'fix it' camp believes these institutions can be transformed to defend the interests of labor and the 'third' world. Once transformed, they can provide progressive global governance in such forms as the enforcement of social clauses in world trade agreements.

The more radical 'nix it' position, championed by anarchists, stands for the abolition

of capitalism and its replacement by a humane, planned, self-managed, stateless, global economy. The 'nix it' position argues that the IMF, WTO and other multilateral structures are inherently anti-working class. Hence, it should be confronted and abolished through class struggle.

Brecher, Costello and Smith's book *Globalization From Below* is a perfect example of the 'fix it' approach, and demonstrates all the flaws and confused thinking in this approach.

The authors devote a large part of the book to discussing the negative impacts of capitalist globalization. Examples include the rapid growth of inequality between and within countries, union bashing, casualization of the workforce, mass retrenchments, cuts in social spending, economic imperialism and instability, and environmental destruction. A second central theme is a discussion of the tactics needed to build a powerful coalition, a 'globalization from below', that can shape the process of capitalist globalization.

These criticisms of capitalist globalization, and proposed tactics for building a movement for 'globalization from below', are not very controversial and many progressives would accept them. Most of the left is, at least, clear that capitalist globalization results in increased working class poverty. They would also support the need for a self-managed coalition against capitalist globalization that recognizes diversity, unites people across borders and across the so-called 'first' and 'third' worlds, and mobilizes on the streets.

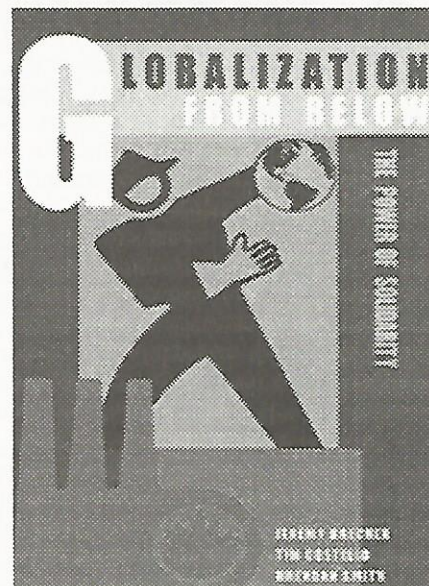
When it comes to building an international movement against capitalist globalization, and to proposing practical alternatives, however, Brecher, Costello and Smith are far less convincing. Brecher, Costello and Smith identify a wide range of social forces that may come together in a movement for globalization from below. These include working class movements in the 'first world,' 'third world peoples and nations,' and a diverse range of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and identity-based-movements, such as feminism and environmentalism.

The authors specifically exclude the neo-

fascist movement in the west, which they describe as sharing few of the progressive and internationalist values of the other social forces. Brecher, Costello and Smith insist, however, that the anti-globalization movement must be a multi-class movement. The movement should not place special importance on the working class or the trade unions.

According to Brecher, Costello and Smith, these social forces should be mobilized in an international and diverse coalition fighting for 'globalization from below'. The aim of this movement should be the implementation of a 'common program'. The movement has to build this program through a 'grand bargain' between the diverse forces in the movement (p. 56).

The 'common program' would not abolish global competition between countries, or replace the giant companies with workers' control, or aim at abolishing capitalism itself. Its demands are more modest. These include international trade regulations that would 'balance internal market development and production for export', set global standards for labor and the environment, set limits on capital mobility, and the establishment of a 'global investment fund' (pp. 56-7, 80).



The authors claim that the effects of this program include a general improvement in social conditions across the world, environmentally sustainable development, the redistribution of wealth, and global economic stability. An impressive list indeed!

Democratized local and national governments would implement the 'common program' together with reformed multilateral institutions, including the IMF, World Bank and WTO, and by new institutions, such as a 'Global Economy Truth Commission'. This commission would 'publicize' and 'refer' corporate 'abuses' to the relevant 'authorities'



(pp. 70-71). All of these institutions would be democratized and made accountable to the 'people'. How? By opening up the political process, ending 'the domination of politics by big money' (pp. 71-2), exerting pressure on the streets.

Brecher, Costello and Smith propose an unlikely international coalition. They have a singular blindspot when it comes to third world regimes, which they describe as 'poor-country governments'. The authors regard these regimes as victims of globalization. As an example of 'globalization from below', the authors point to complaints by these regimes against the WTO, sometimes voiced through the G-77, a coalition of third world governments (pp. 11-12).

But Brecher, Costello and Smith fail to mention that most of the third world states on which their hopes reside are busy inflicting brutal neo-liberal programs on their 'own' working classes. Further, the authors are strangely silent about the content of the third world regimes' complaints with regard to the WTO and international trade agreements.

These regimes' complaints have centered on the introduction of social clauses that would require minimum labor and environmental standards on goods produced for export markets. The complaints have also been on the failure of certain first world countries to fully implement neo-liberal policies by including economic protection deals in trade agreements!

In other words, these third world regimes are supporting the full implementation of capitalist globalization, not an anti-capitalist struggle.

Because Brecher, Costello and Smith fail to develop a class analysis of capitalist globalization, they ignore class conflicts within the 'third' world where capitalist ruling classes are neo-liberal in character and using some of the lowest wages and worst working conditions on the planet to gain entry into the global market.

Third world elites have no material interest in the 'common program'. The competitive advantage of the third world is the ability of its regimes to suppress working class movements, and to bid for foreign investments based on a large supply of cheap, flexible labor. In the context of a long-term global economic slowdown, and subsequent economic restructuring, such competition between capitalists is unavoidable. Such are the allies to which Brecher and company direct the anti-globalization movement! This sentimental

'third worldism' provides a highly naïve and politically dangerous approach to fighting capitalist globalization. This approach has led other radical analysts such as Noam Chomsky to the absurd conclusion that union-bashing dictators such as Mugabe in Zimbabwe and Mahathir in Malaysia are potential allies in the fight against capitalist globalization.

**"A consistent struggle against globalization must be outside and against the state, rejecting the false alternatives of national protectionism and world government. Furthermore, it must be anti-capitalist."**

It is pure hypocrisy to exclude 'first world' neo-fascists from the anti-globalization movement but to ally with dictators in the 'third world,' and reflects a refusal to understand the class character of the post-colonial third world.

Brecher, Costello and Smith's proposal to use the nation state and reformed multilateral organizations such as the IMF and WTO to tame global capitalism is equally problematic. The authors refer to a period when states supposedly provided a vehicle for popular democracy, and a defense against capitalism. Their complaint is that 'big money' has corrupted the political process (pp. 71-2) and that multinational corporations have grown large enough to 'outflank' or 'undermine' the state (pp. 3, 8-9, 10, 24, 36, 37 etc.) Hence, these authors see the key task as restoring power to 'the people' and 'their representatives' in government (p. 40).

This is a remarkably naïve view of the role and functions of the modern state. Brecher, Costello and Smith fail to understand that the states of this world designed, and implemented the neo-liberal policies of capitalist globalization. They also fail to provide a good reason why the multilateral organizations such as the IMF and WTO can be reformed to regulate the world economy in a labor-friendly way.

The multinational corporations do not implement globalization. The states make it possible for the multinationals to globalize their operations in the first place. Organizations such as the IMF, World Bank and WTO, and summits such as the FTAA are, after all, coalitions of governments, both 'first' and 'third world,' and not of corporations. It is simply wrong to portray 'third world' states as no more than victims of globalization.

This is precisely Brecher, Costello and Smith fail to understand: the class nature of 'third world' regimes as instruments of local capitalist elites, operating in a range of shifting alliances

and conflicts with the dominant 'first world' states and their controlling bourgeoisies. It is nonsensical to talk about corporations 'outflanking' the state, as if states are not party to the process of globalization. It is equally ridiculous to direct people to defend the state from globalization, or to treat the state as an ally in the struggle against capitalist globalization, or

to speak about 'reforming' the IMF and similar bodies, as if the state were, like the working class, a victim of the process, rather than a perpetrator.

Brecher and company's analysis is a good example of the pitfalls facing the anti-globalization movement, and the

flaws inherent in the 'fix it' approach. The authors' statist and reformist approach can lead, at best, to the cooptation of the anti-globalization movement in to the structures of capitalist globalization.

At best, it will have the effect of demobilizing popular activities, struggles and movements in favor of using the formal channels of the parliamentary system: this at precisely the moment that the role of states in imposing highly unpopular capitalist policies - and the futility of electoral politics - is more evident than ever.

At worst, it will open the door for the suppression and fragmentation of that movement.

A consistent struggle against globalization must be outside and against the state, rejecting the false alternatives of national protectionism and world government. Furthermore, it must be anti-capitalist. Capitalist globalization is nothing more than an attempt to reverse the global economic crisis by attacking the social and economic rights and conditions of the working class. The class character of capitalist globalization creates the basis for, and sets the limits on, the emerging movement for globalization from below. The international working class must play the leading role in fighting globalization, without allies from local or foreign elites, and without delusions of the role of the nation-state or the multilateral institutions.

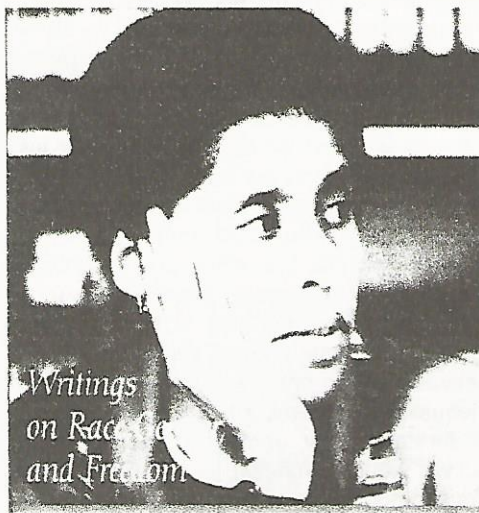
The state or social clauses should not regulate capitalist companies in the short- to medium-term. It should rather be the power of the democratically organized working class to directly enforce decent living, working and environmental standards on an international level. This radical internationalism, this anarchism, contains within itself the possibility of taking the struggle to a higher level, and the constitution of a post-capitalist social order on a world scale, centered on workers' control of production. In other words, the best answer to globalization is 'nix it'.



# The Truth that Never Hurts: Writings on Race, Gender and Freedom

by Barbara Smith  
(Rutgers University Press, 1998)

reviewed by Chris Crass



Barbara Smith has been an activist, organizer and writer for the past three decades, and with the recent publication of, *The Truth That Never Hurts: Writings on Race, Gender and Freedom*, we finally have a book length collection of her groundbreaking ideas, politics and analysis. Throughout her writings on Women's Studies, the contemporary queer movement, police brutality, Black lesbian and gay history, Smith relentless pursues the question of how can we build organizations and a progressive movement that includes the majority of society that feels the heel of oppression on their neck.

How do we build strong coalitions working for radical social change that are multiracial, multigenerational, feminist, pro-queer and class conscious? This collection presents crucial writings that address the complex and painful factors that have kept us apart and how inequality is reproduced in our movements. How can we organize against oppression without recreating oppression in the process of our organizing? How can we have critical dialogues about race, class, gender and sexuality and the ways that they shape our organizing and our politics, while we are working to challenge the larger structures of power and privilege in society? These are questions that she examines and begins to answer.

As a Black feminist lesbian socialist, who has consistently challenged racism and classism in the feminist movement, sexism and homophobia in the Black community, sexism and racism in the queer movement, these issues have never lived in the realm of theory alone. Smith has been a leading figure in the struggle to "build analysis, practice, and movements that accurately address the specific ways that racism, capitalism, and all the major systems of oppression interconnect in the United States." She has helped develop the politics of intersectionality, that looks at the ways that race interacts with gender and

sexuality connects with class and how these structures of oppression and privilege have shaped and influenced people's lives. From this understanding, a politics that seriously addresses multiple issues, multiple struggles and brings people together in broad based coalitions can be built. For example, doing organizing against poverty should include an understanding of how racism has structured the class system and why so many people of color are poor. This organizing should also have an analysis of the ways that sexism impacts women and why so many women raising children without the father around are in poverty. The politics of intersectionality play out when one begins to look at the how different factors impact white men, Latinos, Black men and white women, Asian American women and Black women. The challenge then is how to build coalitions and common agendas and organize to improve the situation for everyone.

Smith became active politically during the Civil Rights movement. She joined the Women's Liberation Movement and was one of the first to articulate a self-defined Black feminist politics. She was a member of the Combahee River Collective, which was formed in 1973. As a member Smith helped write "The Black Feminist Statement" which has been widely circulated and deeply influential in the feminist movement and beyond. The statement declared that their Black feminist collective came together in response to the sexism of the Civil Rights and Black Nationalist movements and the racism of the predominately white feminist movement. The statement also declared that as Black women, they are situated in a unique position to understand the way multiple systems of power operated as race, class and gender connected in their very lives.

In another essay in the book, originally written for *Sinister Wisdom*, Smith writes,

"Racism is not primarily a set of negative attitudes or behaviors on the part of individual whites. These negative attitudes and behaviors are grievous and sometimes fatal, but they are in fact symptoms of a system whose purpose is not merely to make people of color feel badly, but to maintain white power and control". Throughout much of her writings, Smith demands that progressive and radical whites face racism and take action. In another essay in the book she writes: "racism within these movements [the feminist, gay and lesbian, and other social change movements] is an indication of how thoroughly institutionalized racism is in this country's power structure, and that it inevitably manifests itself in every sector of US life. When whites in these movements demonstrate a consistent commitment to speaking out and organizing offensives against racist violence, police brutality, homelessness, economic exploitation and unequal access to quality education and health care, people of color can begin to take their antiracist actions seriously."

Barbara Smith has contributed substantially to making Black lesbianism visible in the Black community, the predominately white feminist and queer movements and the left generally. In "Where's the Revolution" written in 1993, she writes: "...supposedly progressive heterosexuals of all races do so little to support lesbian and gay freedom. Although homophobia may be mentioned when heterosexual leftists make lists of oppression, they do virtually no risk-taking work to connect with our movement or to challenge attacks against lesbians and gays who live in their midst. Many straight activists whose politics are otherwise righteous simply refuse to acknowledge how dangerous heterosexism is, and that they have a responsibility to end it." Smith argues that "With so many heterosexuals studiously avoiding opportunities to become enlightened about lesbian and gay culture and struggle, it's not surprising that nearly twenty-five years after Stonewall so few heterosexuals get it."

When confronting sexism, racism and homophobia in progressive groups and communities, the usual response is denial: "but I'm not a sexist", "I'm not racist". This denial prevents discussion about what we are going to do, how can we acknowledge our positions and work pro-actively. The politics of race, class and gender demonstrate the complexity of power and privilege, that one can be simultaneously oppressed and privileged. With this understanding, it is not about attaching blame and guilt, but rather coming to terms with who and what we are and acting responsibly to work for our collective lib-



eration. Without coming to terms with these issues, we will continue to reproduce inequality, be unable to form broad coalitions, and ultimately fail to achieve our goals of radical social change. Until our movements move beyond the notion of "these are my issues" and "those are your issues" and recognize the larger connections and need to work on "our issues" we will undermine the potential of our efforts. Smith writes, "Real political power, however, lies in the hands of the majority of people in this country who do not benefit from this system: people of color, women, lesbians, gays, workers, elders and the differently abled. Often inspired by the multi-issued leadership of radical women of color, oppressed groups are increasingly banding together in grassroots coalitions to fight the system and to

bring about fundamental political change. Feminists of color who consistently make the links between issues are building a movement whose politics have the revolutionary potential to free us all."

As an anarchist organizer for social justice, Smith's words are both challenging and incredibly inspiring. Over the years, a Black feminist analysis has challenged my anarchist politics, which far too often place the state at the center of oppressive power. Black feminism challenges this kind of hierarchy and forces the debate open to race, gender and sexuality. When one begins to look at power inequality in general, it becomes possible to understand how and why an anti-statist activist would campaign to defeat anti-immigrant propositions at the ballot box, or why anarchists have organized to pass living-

wage ordinances through their local city governments. Smith's writings help us understand that to be anti-racist, feminist, and pro-queer, is to build the organization, campaign and/or agenda around principles and reflect this. It's not about guilt, it's about responsibility and responsible organizing that furthers the possibility for collective liberation rather than individual advancement on the boot straps of white supremacy, patriarchy and class privilege. It's about doing work that is truly revolutionary in its vision, integrity and commitment. This is also truly hard and difficult work and that is why it is so important to have writers like Barbara Smith who inspire us and encourage us. Her writings and ideas should be read and heard by everyone who works and longs for a better world for all of us.

## NO LOGO

by Naomi Klein (Picador USA, 1999)

reviewed by Red & Black Revolution - Ireland.

The publication of *No Logo* was perfectly, if unintentionally, timed. Just as the N30 demonstrations in Seattle made headlines around the world, *No Logo* arrived to explain some of the reasons for that movement. So although Naomi Klein has made it clear that she is not an 'official' spokesperson for the movement - that this movement has no official spokespeople - at a time when observers (and even some participants) wondered what was going on, *No Logo* provided some answers.

Klein starts by discussing how advertising and general business practices have changed in the last twenty years. Essentially, companies decided that they were no longer in the business of selling products, because products are messy, they can be copied, or even improved on. But if you are selling an idea, an experience, a set of associations, it's much harder for another company to compete with you. Sportswear is a good example of a market where price, and quality, isn't that important. People choose between Nike and Adidas because of their ad campaigns, not their shoes.

At the same time as companies started this emphasis on brands rather than products, they started moving out of manufacturing. Manufacturing still has to take place of course, if not by you then by your suppliers, but then dealing with workers can be some-

one else's problem, and you can concentrate on building your brand.

Now a lot of the actual manufacturing of clothes, computer parts, and other industries has moved to the developing world. Unlike the west, where workers expect a

decent wage, and are organized enough to demand it, in the free trade zones in China, Indonesia, the Philippines, Mexico, and many more countries, factories can be run with little outside interference. The description of these free trade zones, where workers sometimes work up to 100 hours a week, in appalling conditions, is the most interesting and useful part of the book. Workers there are barely paid enough to live on, and often work compulsory (and sometimes unpaid) overtime. Most of the workers in these factories are young women because they are thought to be easier to dominate, and less capable of organizing themselves. Even when workers start to unionize, they can be summarily fired, and large-scale agitation faces the constant threat that the factory will be simply packed up and moved to another zone. Solidarity with these workers, and outrage at the conditions they live in, was one of the driving forces of the Seattle and Prague protests.

Where *No Logo* fails is in its attempt to tie these different themes together. Klein tries to argue that companies have to spend more money on 'branding', and this is why production is moving to sweatshops. Companies can't afford to have factories and a brand, so they ditched the factories. But it's not just the big brands that are made in sweatshops. Nike runners may be made in Indonesia, but so are the own-brand run-

ners in your supermarket. Gap shirts are made in sweatshops, but so are the shirts in the department store. The sweatshops aren't a result of branding, they're a product of the desire of companies to cut costs. Some companies will then keep their prices low, while others will spend a lot on advertising, but hope to make even more by charging higher prices.

The sweatshops are nothing new. They existed in the west, alongside hellish factories, and unsafe mines about a century ago. Bosses always try to keep their costs down, because decent pay and safe working conditions just eat into their profits. Conditions didn't improve because the rich had a change of heart - every pay rise, every reduction in the working week, every safety standard had to be fought for. The same struggle is going on around the world today, and it's a fight against capitalism, not logos.

This is why *No Logo* is ultimately disappointing. When it tries to be constructive, and suggest actions we can take, too much time is spent talking about 'subverting' advertisements, or painting over billboards. Ads may be annoying, and this kind of thing can be fun, but it doesn't really accomplish anything. Consumer boycotts are explored, even while their weaknesses are admitted. So there's less room to explore ways that we in the west can help sweatshop workers get organized, and how we can help their struggles, which should be the objectives of any campaign. *No Logo* is still an interesting book, and possibly a good introduction for those who don't know much about the issues involved. But as a political analysis, or a guide to action, it's severely limited by Klein's unwillingness to admit that the problem is not advertising, but capitalism.



## Continued Debate with John Zerzan

To the Northeastern Anarchist:

NA published a letter from me plus a long reply to it in your last issue. In hopes of further dialogue and clarification, here are a few comments.

First of all, I frankly wonder if any leftist project will ever be open to questioning fundamental institutions or categories like division of labor, domestication, civilization, mass production. The NA response to the challenge of problematizing these institutions shows what lengths the left will go in order to keep avoiding such questioning. The response is simple denial, at the level of definitions. Namely, division of labor, production, etc. are not institutions at all; they are mere ideas, concepts. Wow, case closed!

Just prior to this verbal slight-of-hand, which entirely dismisses consideration of primitivist critique, the point is made that it is "dangerous" to be critical of the left. Such thinking might confuse people; it might constitute an abandonment of the left's "traditional political base."

Is it really still possible to cling to such orthodoxy in light of the massive failure of the left? Its overall bankruptcy, especially its total lack of effectiveness in terms of preserving people and nature from the onslaughts of industrial capitalism, would counsel against such dogged loyalty.

Like the rest of the left, NA evidently does not wish to be awakened from its slumber of tradition and conformity. NA sees capitalism as the entirety of the problem, but cannot fathom the depth of capital, because of an unwillingness to look for its origins in more

fundamental institutions.

Mainstream anthropology tells us that division of labor, domestication, and other social catastrophes date from the agricultural revolution of some 10,000 years ago. Pre-agricultural existence was characterized by non-hierarchical, face to face social groups, gender equality, resource sharing, and an absence of organized violence.

Yet, the project of maintaining "the production process," of maintaining a "complex society," is not at issue for NA. These dimensions, which themselves embody the problem, remain unexplored, and NA remains in the dark. We must do better than this deliberate refusal to consider the root causes of worldwide destruction of communities, ecosystems, and the planet's future.

- John Zerzan

## NEFAC Responds...

Dear John,

Our correspondence points out a clear difference between our theoretical perspectives. The problem of definitions demonstrates just how complicated it is to engage in a dialogue when the parties involved are essentially speaking two different languages. I stand by my previous claim that institutions are structures by which society is organized and that what you present as such are still just concepts which manifest themselves in various forms in societies with different forms of social organization.

It is important for anarchists to question the authoritarian tendencies in the Marxist left. We must not fall into the trap that many of our comrades had during the Russian Revolution and Spanish Civil War in associating our movement with the authoritarian left. History clearly has demonstrated the failure of this tendency. It has not, as you seem to assert, invalidated the basis of the left's analysis. In this age of growing monopolization and globalization of capital, the leftist critique is more relevant than ever. The fact that the authoritarian model of leftist organization is dead and gone only serves to demonstrate that the only option for revolution against the current social system is anti-authoritarian.

The only segment of the left which has truly failed in its "effectiveness in terms of preserving people and nature from the onslaughts of industrial capitalism" is the authoritarian left with its over-reliance on the western, hierarchical model of social development. Much of the struggle for environmental preservation is itself a class struggle. We see this struggle manifesting itself in the

battle against environmental racism where communities of people of color oppose corporate behavior which directly attacks their community. We see this struggle in indigenous people's movements which fight against their enslavement into the wage system, the destruction of their societies, and the devastation of their lands against corporate domination. These are not struggles to return to a life which existed over 10,000 years ago; but to take control of their lives from the hierarchical domination of capital and the oppression of the state. Decentralized control of society and social production is guaranteed to reduce the destruction of nature if only because human beings understand the basic notion that you do not destroy your own home. Whether this society works to preserve nature or not is a different debate and we may very well find ourselves on the same side of the issue.

It is true that mainstream anthropology says that "pre-agricultural existence was characterized by non-hierarchical, face to face social groups, gender equality, resource sharing, and an absence of organized violence." However, critical anthropology has found that many of these findings are the result of ethnocentric preconceptions of western, male anthropologists. In fact, there were often informal hierarchies in such societies, gender inequality, and organized violence was rare but did occur. For every society of the form which you uphold as existing for all humans there was one which displayed hierarchy and inequality. Rather than attempting to replicate social forms which have not existed for thousands of years, the anarchist movement should learn how we can apply non-hierarchical organizational forms to our current social structures.

What bothers me most about the primitivist critique is its inherent misanthropy and nihilism. There is a fear that human beings are incapable of organizing themselves and society in manner that is both complex and non-hierarchical. Are we to believe that people are so unreliable, so untrustworthy that we cannot organize ourselves into social forms which are non-coercive and non-destructive and provide a certain level of material comfort? If so, then what are we to do about the masses who cannot abide by the primitivist vision of life without modernity? More importantly, how does the primitivist vision address the need to feed, clothe, and shelter a population of over six billion people? Surely, the vast population of the world would not be able to forage and subsistence hunt without either eliminating all of the basic food sources available to them or collapsing into mass conflict. Is this part of the primitivist vision as well? How do we achieve a sustainable society in the world today? It appears to me that the return to pre-agricultural life would require massive catastrophes and possible acts of genocide.

Anarchist-communism provides a vision of society that both address the current struggles against the most oppressive elements of modern society, capital and the state, and a vision of the future which provides for material and personal security. It envisions a world where humanity and nature are free from the exploitation of capitalism and the state. It provides a model of society which incorporates all people in structures of mutual aid. It is a society of freedom in its purest sense.

- Stanislav Vysotsky (NEFAC-Boston)

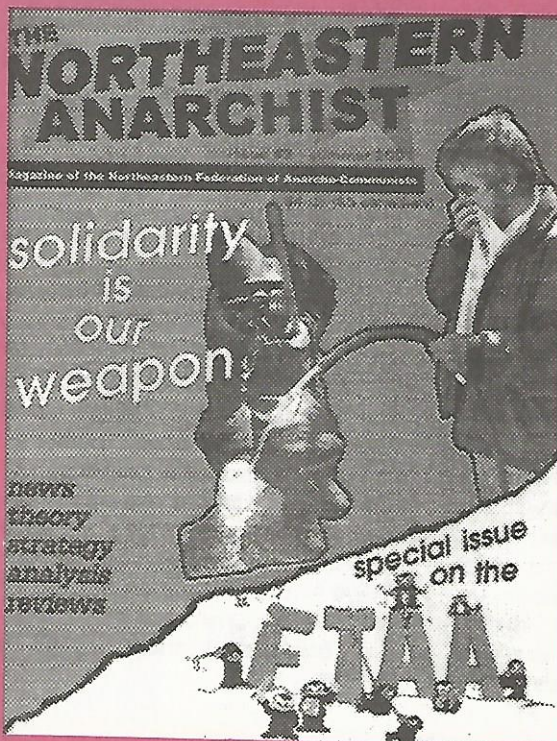


La NEFAC est fière d'annoncer la sortie du premier numéro de sa revue francophone: RUPTURES. Sur 32 pages format "télé-horaire" (si! si!) Ruptures tente d'aborder un champ non couvert par la presse d'agitation: l'analyse et la théorie.

Abonnement et distribution: Une revue militante ne peut survivre que grâce aux abonnements, alors, abonnez-vous! Québec/Canada régulier: 12\$ pour 4 numéros, soutien et hors-Québec/Canada: 24\$ et plus. Pour la distribution: 3\$ poste payée l'ex.; 2,75\$ l'exemplaire pour 3 copies et plus; 2,50\$ l'exemplaire pour 10 copies et plus; 2\$ l'exemplaire pour 20 copies et plus. (hors-Québec/Canada ou plus d'exemplaires, contactez-nous). Les chèques peuvent être fait à l'ordre de "Groupe Émile-Henry".

Pour toute correspondance: Groupe anarchiste Émile-Henry, C.P. 55051, 138 St-Vallier Ouest, Québec (Qc), G1K 1J0, Canada.

[www3.sympatico.ca/emile.henry/nefac.htm](http://www3.sympatico.ca/emile.henry/nefac.htm)



The *Northeastern Anarchist* is the English-language magazine of the Northeastern Federation of Anarcho-Communists (NEFAC), covering news of revolutionary resistance from the region and publishing class struggle anarchist theory, history and analysis in an effort to further develop anarchist communist ideas and practice.

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